

P401/P515 Fall 2010: History of Philosophy: Special Topics Anselm of Canterbury Lecture Notes

Paul Vincent Spade



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Preliminaries

This is a double-numbered course. Some of you will be taking it as a graduate course in medieval philosophy, and others will be taking it as a senior-level undergraduate course “Special Topics in History of Philosophy.”

Topic: Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109).

Some of you perhaps already know something about Anselm of Canterbury. He was the author of the famous “ontological argument” for the existence of God, and we will certainly be talking at length about that. A few of you may know a little more about Anselm from other courses in various departments.

But I can pretty well guarantee there are lots of things in Anselm that you don’t know about, and that are worth your time. For example, he not only has views on what we might call “philosophical theology” or “philosophy of religion,” as you might expect, but also interesting and novel views on free choice, the nature of truth, ethics, the nature of justice, logic, philosophy of language, modality, plus several topics you might normally think of as belonging more to theology than to philosophy: the Trinity, the Incarnation, human Redemption.

We will talk about all of it, including the theological material—because, as we will see, the philosophy and the theology are not really separable in Anselm.

Pass out Syllabus.

Textbooks: There are only two actual “textbooks” I am asking you to buy, but there will be additional reading, as we’ll see.

- Thomas Williams, ed. and trans., *Anselm: Basic Writings* (Hackett). A volume of translations. Despite the title, this volume contains not just the basic works, but—with two exceptions—all the works except for the letters (although it has one of those too) and a few prayers and “meditations.” The two exceptions are **(1)** an odd little dialogue called *De grammatico* (= *On the Grammarian*, or even *On the Literate Person*). We will have occasion to talk about that work later in the course. And **(2)** a theological work called *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit*, which we’ll likewise talk about briefly.

Several years ago I taught an earlier version of this course, and the Williams volume was not yet available. At that time I used a volume by Brian Davies and G. R. Evans, entitled *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works* (Oxford). I didn’t like that work, because the translations were very uneven and came from a variety of different translators with completely different translation-conventions—and in some cases I thought the translations were basically useless. The Williams translations are far superior. Still, the Davies and Evans volume does have translation of the two works missing from the Williams volume.

- Brian Davies and Brian Leftow, *The Cambridge Companion of Anselm* (Cambridge). A collection of articles covering basically all aspects of Anselm. They are of varying quality, but by and large pretty good. On the whole, the volume is excellent. We will be reading basically all of it by the end of the semester.

Let me say a word about why Anselm. That is, why do a course devoted to one individual, and why pick Anselm in particular?

Because he's the perfect medieval author for non-specialists in medieval philosophy to focus on.

In early authors, such as Augustine, students frequently ask: Where is the philosophy? The style of writing is so unlike present-day philosophical writing that students are often just baffled. For example, Augustine's *Confessions*. The work is a classic of the first order, to be sure, but it makes for difficult reading. It's often difficult to find any actual arguments in Augustine; instead, we are presented with a kind of vision of the way things are, together with an exhortation to adopt the same point of view.

On the other hand, with later authors such as Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, or William of Ockham), there's so much jargon and technical vocabulary that students frequently have no idea what's going on. It's just too intimidating.

But Anselm is just right. He provides real arguments, often very clever and interesting ones. And yet philosophy has not yet got so academic as to be inaccessible to all but specialists.

Furthermore, there has been in recent years a kind of cottage industry in studying Anselm. People always talked about his "ontological argument," but more and more people are focusing on other things. (For instance, Marilyn Adams.)

Mechanics of the Course

Take a look at the *Syllabus*. Note first of all the Oncourse site. When you first go to Oncourse, you will see two tabs across the top—among others. One will say either FA10 BL PHIL P401 20448 (if you're taking this course under the undergraduate number), or else **FA10 BL PHIL P515 22178** (if you're taking it under the graduate number). The other tab will say **FA10 BL PHIL P401 C16120**. You want the latter tab. (You will be forwarded if you go to one of the others.)

As for the sequence of topics we will be discussing, see p. 3 of the *Syllabus*. I'm not really sure how long various topics will take. But that, at least, will give you the sequence.

Requirements

- Weekly 15-point quizzes on Oncourse, beginning next week, September 8. (Wed. 3:45 p.m. to Sunday midnight.) For terminology, names, factual things.
- Term-paper.
- A series of research reports on various items in the secondary literature. What is a research report? Not a term paper (that's a more extended affair), and not just a book report or "article report" on the secondary literature.

That is, I don't just want you to tell me what a particular item in the secondary literature says. I want you to engage it: is it a plausible reading on Anselm, is it theoretically plausible in its own right, and so on?

One of the things I want you to do in this course is learn how to deal with the scholarly literature on a historical figure such as Anselm. Unlike what you will find if you are used to dealing with philosophy topically rather than historically. Also unlike what you will find in the secondary literature for a lot of more familiar figures in the history of philosophy: e.g., Descartes or Hume.

For example, a lot of the literature on Anselm is not written by philosophically trained scholars at all, but by people approaching Anselm from the perspective of intellectual history more generally, or theology, or Church history, or whatever. And a lot of the literature on Anselm is written by people who don't have a very good knowledge of Anselm at all, but just want to talk about "the issues." (This is especially true for the "ontological argument.")

This is the sort of thing you have to learn to deal with if you are a historian of philosophy, particularly (although not exclusively) in the medieval period. And that is what I want you to get used to in writing these research reports.

The research reports are meant to short—no more than five pages (double-spaced). That's part of the assignment.

Undergraduates taking this course as P401 will write two such reports; graduate students taking the course as P515 will write four of them. The due dates are listed on pp. 5–6 of the *Syllabus*.

Your term paper will be a more extended project. There I don't want you just to respond critically to the secondary literature by other people (although I do hope you'll use it), but also to formulate your own views on some topic relevant to Anselm.

I will not be giving regular examinations in this class. Your research reports take the place of examinations.

Submitting written work

With the exception of the weekly online quizzes, which will be done on the “Original Test and Survey” utility on Oncourse, all written work for this course will be submitted through the “Assignments” utility on Oncourse.

All such work will be routinely submitted to Turnitin.com.

Reserves

For use in your papers and research reports, I have put a number of items on E-Reserve. Distribute handout on “Bibliography and E-Reserves.” You can get to our E-Reserves page directly from our Oncourse site. (Look in the menu-bar on the left of your screen.)

There is much else available on Anselm, so don’t feel you have to confine your reading about Anselm to these things. Nevertheless, if you want to write a research report on something that isn’t on reserve, check with me first.

If you need to check something in Latin, let me know. I have Anselm’s *Opera omnia* in digital form.

Reading

As described in the *Syllabus*, there is a general reading assignment you should get started on right away: read all of the Williams *Basic Writings* volume, cover to cover. Do this quickly and superficially to begin with—just plough ahead. You won’t know what the issues are at first, but just do it anyway. We will be jumping around to some extent in our discussion, so I want you to have at least a basic idea of what he’s talking about in the various works as quickly as possible.

Apart from that general assignment, read the first two chapters in *The Cambridge Companion*: G. R. Evans’s article, “Anselm’s Life, Works, and Immediate Influence,” and Marilyn McCord Adams’s, “Anselm on Faith and Reason.”

Anselm’s Life

Anselm lived 1033–1109. He died at the age of 76.

We are in a comparatively good situation with respect to knowing about Anselm’s life. With most medieval authors, we don’t know much about the details of their lives, particularly their early lives (because, while they may have been well known when they died, they weren’t well known when they were young). But with Anselm, we are fortunate.

Anselm had a biographer in his own day, a certain Eadmer. Eadmer was roughly 25–30 years younger than Anselm, and was a monk in the monastic community associated with Canterbury Cathedral in England.

Eadmer met Anselm in 1079, while Anselm was visiting Canterbury. Later on, Anselm became Archbishop of Canterbury, and Eadmer renewed their acquaintance and started writing Anselm's biography, based on long conversations with him. Anselm apparently was very fond of talk and reminiscences.

Nevertheless, the biography was more or less "unofficial." It was not done with Anselm's knowledge or permission. In fact, when Anselm learned about the biography-in-progress, he—as Archbishop of Canterbury—ordered Eadmer to destroy the manuscript.

Eadmer was in a quandary. He did want to put down in writing the story of this wonderful man, and yet as a monk he owed Anselm his obedience. Eventually, he came up with a nice solution. He destroyed the manuscript—but not before making a copy of it!

The biography, called *The Life of Anselm (Vita Anselmi)* has been translated by R. W. Southern, on facing pages with a critical Latin edition of the text. I've given you a reference to it in the handout of Bibliography and E-Reserves.

It's not quite a biography in the modern sense, but it's also not mere "hagiography."

Eadmer also wrote a more general history, *A History of Recent Events*, in which again tells the story of Anselm's life.

Almost everything we know about Anselm's life comes either from Eadmer or from occasional things Anselm himself says—for example, in his *Letters*.

No doubt the best modern biography of Anselm, and in fact a magisterial study of the man, is by R. W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (see the handout of bibliography). There have been complaints about various aspects of Southern's biography, but pretty much everyone agrees that it's place you have to start.

Anselm was born in the little town of Aosta, in extreme northwestern Italy, in the Alps. It's near the Mont Blanc tunnel through the Alps.

Distribute handout on "Places."

The word 'Aosta' is a corruption of 'Augustus'. The town was originally named "Augusta Praetoria," after the Roman Emperor Augustus, who founded it in 25 BCE on the site of an earlier tribal settlement. Today it has a population of about 35,000, and was no doubt much smaller in Anselm's day.

Although it was not very big, it was an important town because of its location—which perhaps explains why Augustus founded it in the first place. It lies on one of the major mountain passes across the Alps, and was therefore a constant way-station for merchants, pilgrims, and other travelers.

Although nowadays Aosta is part of Italy, in Anselm's day it looked more north into France than south back into Italy. It was in fact not part of Lombardy at all, which we would think of as Italy, but rather the extreme south end of the kingdom of Burgandy, one of the successor-states that developed after the break-up of the Carolingian Empire in what is now France and Germany.

Anselm's mother was a native of Aosta, named Ermenberga. His father was a Lombard, named Gundulf or Gandulf. (These are not Latin names, but some Germanic language.) They had one other child besides Anselm, a daughter named Richeza (which is probably a version of the modern Italian *richizza* = "wealth"). Apparently the family had some blood-links to nobility and power, but by Anselm's day the line had fallen on hard times and was in decline. Still, they did own some land.

Anselm was a bright and studious child, apparently quite devout. (G. R. Evans's chapter in the *Companion* describes a charmingly pious dream he reported that he had as a youngster and that shaped his personality ever after.)

There is some evidence that his parents had designs for Anselm to become a monk in the local abbey, or perhaps eventually bishop of the cathedral church in Aosta. (The latter, at any rate, would have been a bit of a "power play," not just a matter religious sensibility.) But his mother died c. 1050, when Anselm was c. 17. This event apparently rather disoriented Anselm. He became a rather "wild" young man, there was friction with his father, and eventually Anselm left home in 1056 (age c. 23). He crossed the Alps and spent the next three years traveling around Burgundy and eventually West over into Normandy. During this period, he was probably going from "master" to "master," furthering his education in a kind of "mix and match" fashion.

Eventually, in 1059, he ends up at the abbey of Bec in Normandy. (Nowadays *Le Bec-Hellouin*. (See the handout on "Places.")

What is an abbey? It is a monastery—i.e., a community of men dedicated to a religious form of life, governed by a rule, and presided over by an abbot (hence the name). The term 'abbot' comes from Syriac, and means "father." (It's related to Arabic "Abu," as in Abu Dhabi, Abu Nidal, Abu Ghraib.)

In the case of Bec, the abbot and founder of the community was a certain Herluin, who was a Benedictine monk. (Hence the modern name of the town: *Le Bec-Hellouin*.) It was founded in 1034. Herluin's second-in-command, the Prior at the monastery, was a certain Lanfranc (c. 1005-89), who was to become an important person in Anselm's life. (Note: A "prior" just means someone higher in rank—a "superior." It's usually lower than a abbot, and that was certainly the case at the Abbey of Bec.)

In addition to his other duties, Lanfranc as Prior taught at the abbey school. Many monasteries had schools. For example, you had to teach the monks to read, in order to be able to read the Scripture and chant the prayers. But Lanfranc's school was apparently unusual. First of all, he seems to have been teaching students who had absolutely no intention of becoming monks, but who just needed an education in order to get on in life. Going along with this, he was teaching his students not just the Bible, not just basic theology and canon law, but things like logic and rhetoric.

In fact, it is only under these circumstances that Anselm could have fit in there. For, at least at first, Anselm had absolutely no intention of becoming a monk at Bec. He was just looking to get a good training.

Soon, however, (in 1060) Anselm did decide to become a monk—and at Bec, too. Among other consequences, this meant giving up any claim to the family estate back in Aosta; his father had in the meantime died.

In 1063 (when Anselm was 30), Lanfranc had left Bec to become Prior at the monastery in Caen, nearby. (Again, see the handout on Places.) Anselm was chosen to succeed him as Prior. Eventually, Herluin died, and in September 1078, at age 45, Anselm was elected the second abbot at Bec. (Note: Lanfranc was never abbot at Bec.)

Neither position—Prior or Abbot—was a natural fit for Anselm. He certainly had the intellectual capabilities—no doubt superior to Lanfranc’s in the end. But he was not a particularly good administrator. He didn’t like it, and he hated the time-consuming duties and obligations. He much preferred study and contemplation.

This would be a theme that would mark Anselm’s career from now on. He was never a gifted bureaucrat. He tried hard enough, and he managed to muddle through his administrative duties, which only grew, but he was never good at them and never liked them.

Now, you’ll remember what happened in 1066: the Norman Conquest of England. In 1070, Lanfranc leaves Caen to become Archbishop of Canterbury. About the same time, Anselm began to write, starting with various *Prayers* and *Meditations*. Actually, he wrote the *De grammatico* somewhat earlier, around 1060–63, but he started to write more frequently around 1070. These *Prayers* and *Meditations* are of no particular theoretical interest for us, although they are interesting in their own right. They show a remarkable degree of rhetorical skill. There’s lots of alliteration, rhetorical balances, and other devices you might not be aware of in translation.

Then in 1075–76, while he was Prior at Bec, Anselm wrote the first of his main theoretical treatises, the *Monologion*. (It means “monologue.” The title is also sometimes given in the form *Monologium*.) He was 42 years old at the time.

A number of other works followed, which we will look at as we proceed. He visited Canterbury in 1079, and met his figure biographer Eadmer.

Lanfranc died in 1089, and eventually in 1093 (four years later!) Anselm became his successor. He didn’t want the position, and did everything he could to avoid getting saddled with it. But eventually, there it was: he was Archbishop of Canterbury. There followed a number of political controversies with the king of England over things like who had control over appointing bishops, and where did the Pope fit in, and Anselm spent two extended periods in a kind of exile on the Continent away from his job at Canterbury.

Eventually he returned and died in 1109, and our story is over.

There is a detailed “Chronology” of Anselm’s life in Southern’s biography, much more detailed than the chronology in *Cambridge Companion*. Nevertheless, while it’s useful to have this chronology, it’s not as if the exact chronology of his works is particularly

important. For Anselm's writings show a remarkable unity. That is, there is no real difference in content between his early and his late writings.

Background

Now let me set up some background about medieval philosophy generally.

I like to set up medieval philosophy as the product of two components: **(a)** The classical philosophical heritage from Greece (Rome is not important separately in this instance), and **(b)** Christianity. I don't say "Christian doctrine," because the doctrinal formulation of Christianity was in large measure a result of thinking philosophically about Christian concerns—sin, original sin in particular, grace, redemption, the special status of Jesus, Scriptural passages about the "Son of God" and the "Spirit," etc.

To say Christianity is not to ignore Judaism and Islam, but it is true that Christianity is what gives medieval philosophy its special flavor—particularly if we're talking (as in this course) about Anselm.

Still, it is important to understand that, despite this two-ingredient formula, for the first part of the Middle Ages (including the time of Anselm), the Greek sources of philosophy were largely lost. They were in the wrong language.

- Consider Plato: Of all the works of Plato, only the first half of the *Timaeus* (hardly a representative Platonic work), up to 53c, was available to the "Latin West" in a translation by Chalcidius (or Calcidius), from somewhere between the first half of the 4th century and the early-5th century, together with Chalcidius's commentary. There had been a few other Latin translations made earlier, but most of these vanished from circulation before the Middle Ages got very far along. Cicero himself had translated the *Protagoras* and a small part of the *Timaeus*, and the second century Apuleius did the *Phaedo*, but these almost completely disappeared after the sixth century and had very little effect on anyone.

This state of affairs lasted until the Renaissance, when Marsilio Ficino (1433–99) translated and commented on the complete works of Plato. Remember, except for the first half of the *Timaeus*, the Middle Ages did not know the actual texts of Plato.

As it turns out, there was a copy of Chalcidius's translation of and commentary on the *Timaeus* in the library at Bec in the 12th century. And—peculiarly—there was even a copy of Cicero's fragmentary translation of the *Timaeus* there. But it's unclear whether they were there as early as Anselm, who had left Bec for Canterbury by 1092. And in any case, there is no evidence that Anselm was in any way influenced by having read the *Timaeus*, if he in fact did.

- As for Plotinus, matters were even worse. His *Enneads* (the collection of his writings) were almost completely lost. Marius Victorinus, who was a Roman, slightly older than Augustine (Augustine: 354–430), is said to have translated

some of the *Enneads* into Latin in the fourth century, but his translation, if in fact it really existed, seems to have been lost soon afterwards.

- For Aristotle, the Middle Ages were in somewhat better shape. The same Marius Victorinus translated the *Categories* and *On Interpretation*, but these translations were pretty much lost quickly. And a little later, the logical works in general, except perhaps for the *Posterior Analytics*, were translated by Boethius c. 510–12, but only his translations of the *Categories* and *On Interpretation* ever got into general circulation before the twelfth century. (And they were fairly well known from that point on.) The rest of Aristotle eventually got translated into Latin, but only much later—from about the middle of the twelfth century, well after the time of Anselm. First there came the rest of the logical works, and then the *Physics*, the *Metaphysics*, and so on. Almost all the works of Aristotle we have today had been translated by the middle of the thirteenth century.

This “recovery” of Aristotle in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was a momentous event in the history of mediaeval philosophy. It led to the “technical” kind of late-medieval thought we associate with people like Aquinas and Duns Scotus. But it is after the time of Anselm.

It’s important to emphasize this lack of source-documents of Western philosophy in the early Middle Ages. All they had was the first part of Plato’s *Timaeus*, Aristotle’s *Categories* and *On Interpretation*, and an odd work by the neo-Platonist Porphyry called *Isagoge* (= “Introduction”), which is intended as a kind of introduction to Aristotle’s *Categories*.

But, while it’s important to realize this lack of primary sources, it also should not be over-emphasized. A fair amount of information about ancient pagan philosophy was nevertheless available to the early Middle Ages secondhand. It came, for instance, from:

- Some of the Latin Church Fathers, like Tertullian (3rd century), who wrote before knowledge of Greek died out in the West, and who discussed Greek philosophy in some detail. For that matter, Boethius (c. 480–524/26), whom I’ve already mentioned as translating Aristotle’s *Categories* and *On Interpretation*, also wrote commentaries on them and independent treatises obviously indebted to ancient pagan philosophy, particularly ancient logic.
- Some of the Latin pagan authors, such as Cicero and Seneca, contain a great deal of information about Greek philosophy, much of it pretty reliable too.

But, even from this limited available knowledge of ancient pagan philosophy, how much was available to Anselm while he was being trained at Bec?

In this connection, it is important to remember that Lanfranc, who was no doubt Anselm’s main teacher and mentor, was not just teaching Scripture studies, but grammar, rhetoric and logic. This means that the library at Bec must have included manuscript copies of at least some of Boethius’s translations and writings on logic, and at least some pagan models for rhetoric. Anselm himself cites Aristotle’s *Categories* no fewer than

seven times in the *De grammatico*, and plainly alludes to the *On Interpretation* in *Cur Deus Homo*.

The library at Bec also included at least some of the works of Augustine and other patristic authors. Anselm explicitly cites Augustine's *De trinitate* right in the Prologue to the *Monologion* and a few other places; it is plain in fact that Augustine is one of his major influences. The *Monologion* also clearly makes use of Boethius's definition of eternity in his *Consolation of Philosophy*, although without citing Boethius explicitly.

While the library at Bec was fairly extensive for the day, both in the number of volumes and the breadth of their topics, it was quite small in terms of what we think of today—probably fewer than 100 volumes, I would guess.

Anselm's work is symptomatic of the beginnings of an intellectual revival in Europe. Recall that in the early Christian era, the old Roman Empire split into two parts, an eastern part, headquartered in Constantinople, and a western part, headquartered in the original Rome and various other places in the West. After this split, learning and even literacy declined precipitously in the West. The situation was made worse by the fact that various “barbarian” tribes were running around upsetting things all over Western Europe. (To call them “barbarian” just means they weren't Roman; it doesn't necessarily mean they were uncouth or rude—although many no doubt were.) And shortly afterward, the dreaded Vikings came down out of Scandinavia, making matters even worse. It was not a good time for “culture” and “learning.”

Then, shortly after the year 1000, things seemed to stabilize suddenly. The “barbarian” tribes had become pretty much assimilated, and the Vikings eventually settled down and became respectable. Trade began to pick up. Cities began to grow. And it was once again relatively safe to travel. Anselm's own wanderings, before he ended up at Bec, would have been pretty unlikely just a generation or two earlier.

During the period before Anselm, what learning there was was pretty much confined to the monasteries. The monks preserved and copied the few works of antiquity they had available. But by Anselm's own day, things had begun to revive. Lanfranc's school at Bec, with its relatively well-stocked library, was a symptom of better times to come.

Anselm on Faith and Reason

See also Adams's paper in the *Cambridge Companion*.

Anselm was interested in trying to prove certain truths of the faith. That is, he wanted to argue rigorously, and in a way we would nowadays describe as purely philosophically, for things he already believed in virtue of his religious faith. As a Christian, for instance, he already believed in the existence of God. Nevertheless, he thought human understanding was enough to prove the existence of God all by itself, without appealing to faith.

Some people have found this procedure suspicious, as though the fact that Anselm never doubted the things he was trying to prove somehow tainted the proofs themselves, reduced them to “jury-rigging.”

But this need not be so. Consider: Bertrand Russell, in the early-twentieth century, wrote three huge and enormously technical volumes called *Principia Mathematica*, at the end of which he had succeeded in proving a few elementary mathematical truths, such as $2 + 2 = 4$, on the basis of what he took to be purely logical principles—even though he never for a moment doubted that $2 + 2 = 4$! The extent to which his project was successful is a question that nowadays is subject to some doubt. But no one had ever suggested that the project was suspicious on the face of it, simply because he already knew the answer he was trying to reach.

So too with Anselm. We have to look at his arguments on their own grounds, not just dismiss them in advance as special pleading.

Anselm’s use of philosophical argumentation at the service of religion is not an “apologetical” use of philosophy. That is, it isn’t not designed to defend the faith against non-believers. And it is not designed to shore up his own faith that might otherwise falter.

It’s rather an exploratory use of faith. Anselm didn’t doubt for a moment the existence of God, or the various other articles of Christian faith. But he was curious, and wanted to know how these things were connected with one another, how they “hung together,” and to what extent we could know them only by revelation.

On the other hand, a lot of the secondary literature on Anselm written from the perspective of recent philosophy of religion is motivated by apologetical considerations. I’m thinking of the Alvin Plantinga style of writing, and worries over “the coherence of theism.”

Whatever the merits or demerits of the latter enterprise, this is not Anselm’s worry. Anselm, for example, will talk about reconciling divine justice with divine mercy—but he’s not the slightest bit concerned with defending the faith!

So when people write about the “Anselmian” theory of this or that from a philosophy of religion point of view, we need to ask whether they are putting his views to purposes he himself never intended.

There need not be anything wrong with doing that, but we have to be careful of it for interpreting Anselm himself.

E.g., H. Scott Hestevold, “The Anselmian ‘Single-Divine-Attribute’ Doctrine.” (E-reserves.) Possible research report.

Anselm then was interested in trying to find “necessary reasons” (= *rationes necessariae*) for what he regarded as the truths of the faith. These “necessary reasons” are a common theme in Anselm. In the *Proslogion*, for instance, he tries to prove the existence and nature of God. In the earlier *Monologion*, he gives some additional proofs for these things, and even tries to find “necessary reasons” for the Trinity! In *Cur deus homo*, he tries to find necessary reasons for the Incarnation. (*Cur deus homo* = literally, “Why a

God-Man?” I.e., “why did God become man—why the Incarnation.” It’s a decidedly theological topic. I will probably cite it as *Cur deus homo*.)

All these necessary reasons are based on pure reason (or at least they’re supposed to be), supplemented by ordinary empirical experience. (So they’re not necessarily *a priori* or “analytic.”) There’s no appeal to Scripture, no appeal to theology, no appeal to special mystical experiences, and so on. It is true that, in his late writings—after the *Cur Deus Homo*—he deals explicitly with Scriptural passages, but even then it’s only to show that these passages do not conflict with the results of reason.

By contrast, in Augustine (354–430), theology and philosophy are thoroughly mixed. In Anselm, the two have begun to be separated more clearly.

Anselm was not the first to proceed like this. Boethius (c. 480–524/6), in addition to his translations and writings on logic, had written a series of *Theological Tractates* in all but one of which there is no explicit appeal to Scripture at all.

Eventually, by the time we get to Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century, the distinction between philosophy and theology is quite explicitly established: theology can use philosophical reasoning, but also relies essentially on the data of revelation, Scripture and the teaching tradition of the Church, whereas philosophy relies on pure reason and our ordinary experience, without resorting to the authority of revelation.

The distinction is not yet fully developed in Anselm. Even in this early stage, however, note that Anselm does use philosophical argumentation in dealing with theological topics. Theology for him is no longer just a matter of Scripture studies, or even of the formulation of doctrine, no longer a matter of writing commentaries on the Psalms and the Pauline Epistles, as it had largely been even for Lanfranc right before Anselm.

What’s happening then is that by Anselm’s time theology is becoming a theoretical, argumentative discipline, no longer a matter of “wisdom literature.” Anselm was not the first to push in this direction, but he certainly does it big time.

In this connection, it is instructive to contrast Augustine’s important work *On the Trinity* with Anselm’s treatment of some of the same issues in the *Monologion*. Augustine was looking for various analogies to the Trinity in human experience, various “models” to help us think about this doctrine with a minimum of confusion. The most fertile analogy Augustine could find is the human mind itself, where we find memory, intelligence, and will, each of which is identical with the mind (Augustine says), each of which is somehow distinct from the other two, and each of which is equal to the others: we remember that we remember, know and will; we know that we remember, know and will; and we will to remember, know and will. Augustine thinks this provides a kind of glimpse of how the Trinity works, by analogy. But he certainly doesn’t think he has in any sense “proven” the doctrine of the Trinity; he takes it as given all along that the Trinity is ultimately mysterious and can never be known as the result of unaided human reasoning. All he’s trying to do is to explain how we are to think about it, insofar as we can think about it at all. Anselm, by contrast, seems to think he’s in some sense proving

the Trinity. It's worth looking closely at his procedure here when you read the *Monologion*.

It is interesting to look at Anselm's various statements of his intentions. Look for instance at the Prologue to the *Monologion*. There he says that the work is to adhere to the following restrictions (*Basic Writings*, p. 1—but I am here using my own translation—as I often will):

nothing at all in it would be urged on the authority of Scripture. Rather whatever the end would assert by individual investigations [i.e., whatever conclusions the individual arguments in the book come to], the necessity of reason would briefly infer and truth's clarity would plainly show it to be the case, with a plain style, ordinary arguments and a simple disputation.

Also, look at *Cur deus homo* I.10 [*Basic Writings*, p. 261 top]. Here he says, in effect, let's take for granted all the things we've proved in earlier works by "necessary reasons." But let's not take the Incarnation for granted. Can we then prove the doctrine of the Incarnation (the doctrine that God became man in the person of Jesus) on the basis of the necessary reasons? And furthermore, can we show that the death of Christ is "reasonable and necessary"? His answer to both these questions will be yes; these are astonishingly strong claims!

Possible research report: David Brown, "'Necessary' and 'Fitting' Reasons in Christian Theology." (On CDH). Note the reference to fitting reasons!

But note two things about all this: First, Anselm did not think there was no room for mystery in religion. While he thought it possible, for instance, to prove God is a Trinity of persons, he certainly didn't think it was possible to explain clearly just how that Trinity worked. The talk about intellect and will in God provides a proof that the Trinity exists, but it doesn't explain completely—or even very helpfully—how it all fits together. See *Monologion* 64 (*Basic Writings*, pp. 62–63), the title of which is "That although this cannot be explained, it must nevertheless be believed." Likewise, he thought it possible to prove the necessity of the Incarnation—the need for God to become man. But just how it worked—how the human nature and the divine nature were brought together in a single person—he thought that was beyond our comprehension.

In this connection, note also the limits of Anselm's use of "necessary reasons." He was not importing Greek necessitarianism into Christian thought, at the expense of divine freedom. For instance, he would not have thought there was any necessary reason why God had to create in the first place. But, given that the world exists, Anselm thought it was necessary (it necessarily followed) that it was created *ex nihilo*. See *Monologion* 7–8 (*Basic Writings*, pp. 13–17). Similarly, the *Cur deus homo* does not try to show that God had to become man willy-nilly. But given that man exists, and given that he was created for eternal happiness, and given that he freely fell—given all that, then the Incarnation was necessary—in the sense of "needed."

Second, let me repeat that that Anselm was not trying to prove all these things as though they were subject to some doubt. Rather, the main purpose of these proofs is to explore what he already believes by faith, to see how the doctrines of the faith are connected with one another and with the other things we know. He's concerned to examine Christian doctrine rather than to establish or defend it. Nevertheless, while this is his motivation, his method of appealing only to pure reason seems to guarantee, if it is applied correctly, that the arguments he comes up with will have whatever probative force they have for believer and non-believer alike. That's why Anselm can put his so called "ontological" argument for the existence of God in the *Proslogion* in terms of the Biblical Fool of the Psalms, who says in his heart "There is no God."

This peculiar attitude becomes clear at the beginning of the *Proslogion*, at the end of Chap. 1 (p. 81—but again I'm using my own translation):

Lord, I am not trying to penetrate your heights, for my understanding is in no way equal to that. But I do want to understand your truth a little bit, which my heart believes and loves. For neither do I seek to understand in order to believe, but I believe in order to understand. For I believe this too, that "unless I believe, I shall not understand."

The statement "Unless I believe, I shall not understand" is a very famous slogan associated with Anselm. It's a quotation adapted from Isa. 7:9, in an old Latin translation that predates the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible that was in use in Anselm's day, and is based on the Greek Septuagint. Augustine cites the passage in this old form (for example, in *On Free Choice of the Will* I.2), and that's no doubt where Anselm is getting it.

But, apart from the pedigree of the passage, note the difficulties in understanding it. If Anselm really couldn't understand unless he believed, then in what sense do his proofs not presuppose the faith after all? Perhaps what Anselm means to say is that, while his proofs are in fact iron-clad and don't assume the faith, so that in a sense they should convince even the non-believer, nevertheless the non-believer is somehow not in a position to see how strong these proofs really are. That is, lack of faith not only means you are a non-believer, it also somehow affects your ability to use your pure reason. Anselm is very hard to interpret on these matters. Is this perhaps an implicit reference to the theological view that, as a result of the sin of Adam, we all come into the world with a fallen human nature, and that includes a corrupted human intellect? This is the sort of view that will become quite prominent in certain strands of Reformation thought later on, but perhaps it's already operating here in Anselm.

Let me try to sharpen the point here a little: why is it so hard to interpret Anselm on this point? (Here I'm following Stephen Gersh's article "Anselm of Canterbury," in Peter Dronke's book *A History of Twelfth-Century Philosophy*—as described on the handout of Bibliography, E-Reserves, and Other Resources. **NB:** As flagged there, this article mainly a general overview, and is not eligible for "research reports." But it's still a good article.) Here we go:

- 1) On one hand, Anselm plainly does in some sense think human reason is capable of showing lots of truths of the faith without resorting revelation to (i.e., to things we have to be told—the notion of revelation is no doubt narrower than that, but this will do to make my point):
 - a) The ontological argument in the *Proslogion*—see also his *Reply to Gaunilo* § 8 (*Basic Writings*, pp. 111–12)—is directed against the atheist Fool.
 - b) In the *Monologion* there is no appeal to Scripture—or really to any kind of authority at all. Yet he thinks he can establish the doctrine of the Trinity there.
 - c) CDH “proves” the necessity of the Incarnation and death of Christ.

But notice: If we push this point, it has the result that it makes revelation completely superfluous.

- 2) On the other hand, he plainly doesn't think revelation is superfluous:
 - a) In the *Proslogion* (p. 81, but again this is my translation), we get the point about how “unless I believe, I shall not understand.”
 - b) Gersh cites other passages too on this point. (You may want to check to see whether they really confirm the point Gersh is making. But in any case, the *Proslogion* line does!)

What do we do in such a case? Gersh suggests that we need to keep in mind that the world “reason” (*ratio*) in Anselm means lots of different things—and that's true.

As long as we take it to mean just logical deduction—syllogistic demonstration—we end up with the result that Anselm's “necessary reasons” would render revelation superfluous. And therefore, he concludes, we must look at the other things it can mean.

My reply: It's certainly true that Anselm doesn't proceed syllogistically in any of his arguments I'm aware of. And, to be sure, it's good to have a survey of the various things “reason” can mean for Anselm, as Gersh gives us.

But how does this help with the problem?

Whatever “reason” means, if it's available to non-believers too, then revelation ends up being superfluous. And if it isn't available to non-believers, then the point of the arguments in the *Monologion* and the CDH won't work!

So what does Anselm mean? That's the problem.

Anselm: The *Monologion* Arguments for the Existence and Nature of God

We've already talked about Anselm's avoiding any appeal to Scripture or authority in the *Monologion*, and about how he claims to be arguing all these conclusions simply by “the necessity of reason.” Even apart from his arguments about the Trinity—which I think

most later theologians would have regarded as being overly ambitious, depending on how we interpret Anselm's intentions—I want to call your attention to how much he is trying to do in this work. Simply in the first 26 chapters (which is all I've asked you to look at at this time), he claims to have shown the following. (Look at the Table of Contents on pp. 3–6 of *Basic Writings*—this Table of Contents is actually in the manuscripts of the *Monologion*; it's not something Williams added. Gersh is helpful here on the structure of the *Monologion*—see pp. 265–70.)

- That there is in effect what Plato would have called the Form of the Good, a single entity that is good all by itself and through which every other good thing is good (Chap. 1),
- That there is likewise what we might call a Platonic Form of the “Great” (Chap. 2). We'll talk about what this is later on.
- That there likewise is a single entity that “exists through itself” and through which all other existing things exist (Chap. 3). As it turns out, this is going to be probably the most important chapter in the entire work. The same point is developed further in Chap. 4.
- Then in Chaps. 5–9, we get some spinning out of the various senses in which we can say that a thing exists “through” something and that it exists “out of” something. In effect, what's going on here is that Anselm wants to say that everything besides God exists through God—that is, depends on God—and yet do justice to the theological doctrine that all creatures are created *ex nihilo* (“out of” nothing).
- In Chaps. 10–11, we get our first glimpse of the notion that this supreme being we've proven the existence of is a conscious being with a plan.
- In Chaps. 12–14, we get some discussion of the supreme being's essence and its relation to creatures.
- In Chap. 15 there is a distinction drawn between what we can say about it essentially and what we can say about it only relationally. Along the way, he argues that this supreme being is incorporeal.
- In Chaps. 16–17, we get the famous Anselmian doctrine that God's essence is identical with all his essential features. In other words, it's not that just that God is essentially just; he's identical with justice. So too, God isn't just essentially wise; he's identical with wisdom. Notice that this has the consequence (by substitution of identicals) that justice is wisdom.
- In Chaps. 18–24, we get a very interesting discussion of how God can be said to be outside space and time even though we also say God is everywhere and at all times.
- In Chap. 25, Anselm argues that the supreme being is not subject to accidental change.

- Finally, in Chap. 26, we get a discussion of how the supreme being is and is not related to the Aristotelian category of substance.

Now that is quite a lot, and it's all done in less than thirty pages! In effect, what Anselm has done is give us the Middle Ages' first systematic treatise on what later came to be called "natural theology." That is, what we can know about God on the basis of ordinary human reasoning, without resorting to revelation. I know of nothing quite like it earlier.

Now let me give you a kind of road-map of the rest of the *Monologion*, just so you'll have an idea of the overall plan of the book:

In Chap. 27 or thereabouts (the dividing line isn't sharp), Anselm begins talking about the Trinity. This runs to Chapter 64.

Finally, in Chapters 65–the end in 80 (again, the exact dividing line isn't entirely clear), there is some miscellaneous additional material at the end of the work, including stuff on life after death, immortality of the soul, and so on.

The arguments in Chapter 1

Anselm—both here in the *Monologion* and later in the *Proslogion*—tries in effect to prove the existence of God. But what exactly is he doing in these places? What does it take to count as a proof for the existence of God?

Here I refer you to my paper "What Is a Proof for the Existence of God" (not eligible for a "research report"). I know think this is a good example of how not to write a philosophy paper! It's too "analytic" in a sense that was very popular and trendy when I wrote it, but it just needless.

Pascal had said: "The God of the philosophers is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

That is, whatever the philosopher ends up proving by his philosophical arguments, the non-believer can always say: that's not God! Suppose the philosopher proves the existence of an "uncaused cause" (as Thomas Aquinas, for instance, will try to do). The non-believer can always object, "why should that be God?" Why isn't it instead some kind of subatomic particle?

So, just how much do we have to prove in order to count as proof of the existence of God in particular? That this "first cause" parted the Red Sea? That it appeared in the burning bush? That it was incarnated? That it rose again on the third day?

Suppose a (monotheistic) religion that holds a set of beliefs BEL about God. If you accept that religion and want to prove the existence of God, do you have to prove there is something that satisfies BEL?

That's way too strong! For many people in the Christian tradition (including Anselm?), you can't do that—and indeed it's a consequence of BEL that you can't do it! Yet they think you can prove the existence of God!

Therefore, my candidate for what it takes to be a proof for the existence of God: Pick a property \emptyset such that $BEL \rightarrow \text{God uniquely has } \emptyset$, and then philosophically show $(\exists x) \emptyset x$.

This of course will not answer the non-believer. But “what else can it be?” For instance, if you believe in a God that created (and thus caused) absolutely everything else besides himself, and have a proof of a “first cause,” then from the point of view of your belief set BEL, what else could that “first cause” be but God? I refer you to my paper for the details.

Note that Anselm adheres to this method in the *Monologion*. The actual word ‘God’ occurs only very rarely in this work. Instead he talks about a “supreme being” or “supreme nature.” It's not as if we're not supposed to know who he's talking about, but the fact remains, he doesn't say “God.”

Let's begin at the beginning. In Chapter 1, Anselm gives his first argument for the existence of God—actually, of a supreme good. This is not a particularly forceful argument unless you are an out and out Platonist. Actually, there are two arguments, or two strands of argument, contained in this Chapter 1, and both of them are in effect arguments for Plato's Form of the Good.

The first argument

(Distribute handout “The *Monologion* Arguments for the Existence of God.”)

The first argument, boiled down, runs like this (*Basic Writings*, pp. 7–8): People desire things insofar as they think they are good (whether they're really good or not). Now as a matter of fact, many things are good. Hence, the argument concludes, there is some one thing—goodness—in virtue of which all those good things are good.

Notice the first premise (p. 7): “After all, everyone desires to enjoy only those things that he thinks good.” Does this amount to saying that no one knowingly chooses evil (the “Socratic Paradox”)? If so, then what is that going to do for Anselm's theory of free choice? But perhaps it doesn't imply that. Desires are not at all the same things as choices. I can choose, after all, to act contrary to my desires. But perhaps it makes no difference to the argument here. For note also that this first step of this argument, about desires, seems completely idle. It's not appealed to at all later in the argument. So, as far as the actual argument is concerned, whether that first step commits one to the Socratic principle that no one knowingly chooses evil, is altogether irrelevant.

This argument rests on a pretty strong claim, the general form of which runs as follows: Whenever two or more things are alike in being \emptyset (‘ \emptyset ’ is to be replaced by some adjective or common noun), there is a single entity, \emptyset -ness, in virtue of which they are all \emptyset .

That's the first argument, in effect an argument for a Form of the Good.

The second argument

The second argument, or perhaps the second strand of the argument (if we think of Chap. 1 as giving us a single argument) occurs on p. 8: "... Now who would doubt that this thing, through which all goods exist, is itself a great good?"

Anselm doesn't actually give us a real argument for this second strand; he just says "Who would doubt it?" But the move is a straightforwardly Platonic one, and Anselm could have got it from any number of sources (but not from Plato himself, recall, since the texts of Plato were not available to Anselm): Whenever you have things that are *more- \emptyset* and *less- \emptyset* , they are measured against a standard or ideal, which is \emptyset to the highest degree: the *most- \emptyset* .

In the literature on Plato, this is called the self-predication assumption. The standard by which we judge things to be more or less \emptyset is itself \emptyset , and is indeed \emptyset most of all.

This is Platonism, in the sense that it's a Platonic principle that is perhaps plausible in the case of values and mathematical ideals, where Platonism has always been most appealing. Approximations of circularity, for example, are judged with respect to the perfect circle, which is a circle *par excellence*. The principle is perhaps not so plausible in realms other than values and mathematical ideals. We have larger and not-so-large, but no largest. Again, there is hot and hotter, but no hottest. Largeness, however, is not a matter of values or ideals. Of course in the present instance, that's no problem, since what we're talking about in this case is a value—goodness—so that the principle is quite at home here.

The convergence of the two strands of argument

There's an implicit third assumption operating in this Chapter 1, namely, that the two strands of the argument we've just examined are talking about the same thing. That is, that in virtue of which all good things are good is also the standard against which good things are measured. In other words, things get their goodness from the same thing to which we turn to measure their goodness. Again, this is a quite familiar Platonic notion.

If we grant Anselm this implicit assumption (and it is only implicit here), then the two strands of argument complement one another nicely. The first strand shows there is one goodness in virtue of which all good things are good, but by itself it doesn't show that this goodness is itself good. The second strand of the argument shows there is a highest good, which is itself good, but doesn't by itself show there's only one such highest good. You need both arguments—and you need them both to be talking about the same entity—if you want to be sure you're talking about something that's a plausible candidate for God.

Of course, even if you do have this implicit third assumption, you still have only shown the existence of something like Plato's Form of the Good. You have to go on now to argue that this thing you've just proved the existence of has also the other properties associated with God. Anselm gives that a try in later chapters of the *Monologion*.

How to avoid the “Third Man”

If you’re familiar with Plato, you will remember that there is a problem with the theory of Forms, one that Plato himself recognizes in the first part of his *Parmenides* (131e–32b). It’s the famous Third Man Argument, and goes like this. Suppose two things:

- (a) Whenever you have a class of things that are alike in being \emptyset , there’s some other entity, \emptyset -ness, in which they all share. (Call this the “One-Over-Many” Principle.)
- (b) \emptyset -ness is itself \emptyset . (Call this the “Self-Predication” Principle.)

If you accept both these claims, then you’re going to have a problem. If α and β are both \emptyset , then (by the “One-Over-Many” Principle) there’s something else γ , called “ \emptyset -ness,” in virtue of which α and β are both \emptyset . But (by the “Self-Predication” Principle) \emptyset -ness is itself \emptyset . Now take the class α, β, γ . They are all \emptyset . Hence (by the “One-Over-Many” Principle again) there is a fourth thing, δ —a kind of \emptyset -ness₂—in virtue of which α, β , and γ are all \emptyset . And so on. As you see, we are committed to an infinite regress of \emptyset -ness, \emptyset -ness₂, \emptyset -ness₃, ... Hence, we never really have a full explanation how things got to be \emptyset . However far you go, you always have to appeal one step further.

How does Anselm avoid this regress, Plato’s Third Man? Of course Anselm didn’t have the text of the *Parmenides*, or the texts of Aristotle where the Third Man Argument is mentioned, and so probably never heard of this argument in connection with Plato. But still, is he committed to a “Third Man” type argument anyway, whether he realizes it or not? After all, premise (b) above (“Self-Predication”) is just the principle behind the second strand of argument in Anselm’s Chapter 1, and premise (a) (the “One-Over-Many” Principle) seems to be the principle behind the first argument.

Well, Anselm does manage to avoid the infinite regress. He does it by not requiring that the one entity in virtue of which all those \emptyset things are \emptyset has to be other than—distinct from—the things that are \emptyset . That is, he would delete the word ‘other’ in the “One-Over-Many” Principle.

Virtue and happiness are both good in virtue of goodness, which is itself good. But we don’t have to go any further to explain why goodness itself is good. It is good through itself. So while Anselm does seem

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 (*Basic Writings*, p. 8) is very short, and basically just says you can apply the same kind of argument to show that there is something in terms of which all great things are great, and which is itself the greatest of all.

There’s not much new to be learned from this chapter. But I do want to call your attention to the significance of the word ‘great’ here. For later on, in the famous “ontological argument” in the *Proslogion*, Anselm starts off by defining God as that than which no

greater can be thought. Now, while that's the *Proslogion* and not the *Monologion*, there's probably every reason to think Anselm is using the notion of "great" in pretty much the same sense in both works. And in this connection, note what he says here, in Chap. 2 of the *Monologion* (p. 8):

Now I do not mean great in size, as a given body [= physical object] is great [in other words, 'great' doesn't mean "big"]; rather, [I mean great in the sense] that the greater something is, the better or worthier it is, as wisdom is great.

Since 'greater' means 'better', as he says, 'great' must mean 'good'. (So Chapters 1 and 2 are making basically the same point.) File that fact away for future reference when we come to the ontological argument.

In this connection, I want to call your attention to the article by R. Brecher, "'Greatness' in Anselm's Ontological argument" (on E-Reserves). Brecher argues that this is just false, and that 'great' does not mean the same as 'good' for Anselm. It's true, he says, that better ↔ greater for Anselm, but 'good' is a moral-evaluative term, while 'great' is ontological. (The Platonic picture of "Degrees of Reality.") He gives lots of evidence that Anselm does distinguish these two notions in the *Proslogion*, but – curiously – he doesn't mention *Monologion*, Chap. 2, which says just the opposite!

The argument in Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, we get an interesting new argument, which turns out I think to be perhaps the most central argument in the entire *Monologion*, since so many other conclusions in later chapters depend on the argument in Chapter 3. And in fact, we might well claim that the arguments in Chaps. 1–2 could be dispensed with, as long as we have the argument in Chap. 3.

We've just seen the argument in Anselm's Chapter 1 that there is one goodness in virtue of which all good things are good, and it is good through itself, and the claim in Chap. 2 that a similar argument can be mounted for greatness, which isn't surprising, since he there identifies greatness with goodness.

The notion of things that have certain features they don't get in virtue of something else, but have just through themselves (= *per se*) in this way, leads to a much tighter argument in Anselm's Chapter 3, an argument that does not rely on the Platonic "Self-Predication" Principle, as does the second strand of argument in Anselm's Chapter 1, although it does rely at one point on the equally Platonic "One-[Not-Necessarily]-Over-Many"¹ principle that stood behind the first strand of argument in Anselm's Chapter 1.

The key notion in this argument in Chapter 3 is the notion of a thing's "existing through" something, and in particular the notion of something's "existing through itself." The

¹ See the discussion of the Third Man Argument, p. 20 above, for why I put this principle in this odd way.

rough idea is “Where does the thing get its existence?,” “What does it depend on?” (That’s only very rough, and we’ll try to firm it up.)

Now Anselm is perfectly willing to grant that some things don’t depend on anything else at all for their existence. If they exist, they exist through themselves. They are, so to speak, “self-existent”; they depend on nothing besides themselves. We want to allow this, but we aren’t going to assume there are any such things at the outset of the argument.

It’s worth spending some time to get clear about this notion of “existing through” at the outset, since so much is going to rest on it in the *Monologion*. I said that, roughly speaking, it amounts to “depending on,” and that’s a good first approximation. But there’s a problem:

To say that x depends on y suggests a kind of priority of y over x—if not a priority in time, then at least causal priority or a priority in the order of explanation.

But “prior to” is what logicians call asymmetrical: if y is prior to x, then x can’t also be prior to y (in the same respect). Hence, nothing can be prior to itself. And therefore, if “existing through” just means “depending on,” and “depending on” implies a kind of priority, then nothing can exist through itself. But that’s not what we want. Anselm’s whole point in Chap. 3 is that there is exactly one thing that does exist through itself.

On the other hand, if we just get rid of the sense of priority and posteriority (eliminate the asymmetry), and say that x exists through y iff x requires y, in the sense that you can’t have x without having y, then of course everything exists through itself (at least), since you can’t have x without having x! And in that case, we would have to understand that, when Anselm says in Chapter 3 that there is something that exists through itself, that’s trivial, and that what he really means is that there is something that exists only through itself, and not through anything else as well.

That’s the way I’ve interpreted the Chap. 3 argument in the past. But I’ve subsequently come to realize that this isn’t the way Anselm actually talks. He doesn’t say that everything exists at least through itself, and that everything except God exists through something else as well. He seems to use “exists through itself” as meaning “exists only through itself.” (That is, while “exists through” in general does not amount to “exists only through,” it seems that “exists through itself” does amount to “exists only through itself.”)

I suggest we proceed like this. And now I’m going to be a little “logical,” so just bear with me. Let’s begin with a preliminary notion: x requires y. (This is not a piece of Anselmian vocabulary. But let’s adopt it provisionally, just to see if we can figure out what’s going on.)

Let’s say then that ‘x requires y’ simply means “You can’t have x without y,” or “The existence of x entails the existence of y.” And let’s abbreviate “requires” by “R.”

Now let’s notice some things about this “requires” relation.

First of all, it’s what logicians call reflexive. That is, you can’t have x without x, or the existence of x entails the existence of x. That’s trivially true, and applies to any x. And in

this respect, the “requires” relation will differ from the “exists through” relation that we’ll define in a moment, since not everything will “exist through” itself.

(Thus, we have: xRx .)

Second, the “requires”-relation is transitive. That is, if x requires y , and y requires z , then x requires z . ($xRy \ \& \ yRz \rightarrow xRz$.)

Now, given that, we can define “exists through” (= ET) as in terms of the “requires” relation as follows:

$$xETy =_{df.} xRy \ \& \ (x=y \leftrightarrow (z)(x \neq z \rightarrow \sim xRz))$$

(See the handout “*The Monologion Arguments for the Existence of God,*” bottom of p. 1 and top of p. 2.)

That is, x “exists through” y iff (i) x “requires” y [you can’t have x without having y], and (ii) x just is y (i.e., they are identical, so that we’re saying that x exists through itself) if and only if x doesn’t require anything else.

Think about that. This allows that something can exist through itself, but only if it doesn’t require the existence of anything else. And it also allows that some things can exist through things other than themselves.

Notice that, unlike the “requires” relation, the “exists through” relation is not reflexive. Not everything automatically exists through itself. Some things require for their existence the existence of something else too, and in that case they can’t be said to “exist through” themselves. Note also that the fact that “exists through” isn’t reflexive is not just a point of logic, but a substantive metaphysical claim. As far as logic is concerned, everything might very well be totally independent of everything else! Nevertheless, the claim seems uncontroversial enough. Some things, for example, are the effects of other causes.

On the other hand, the “exists through” relation, this time like the “requires” relation, is transitive. How do we know that? Well, there are two subcases:

1. If x exists through itself, then x doesn’t require and so doesn’t exist through anything else (from the definition), so that transitivity in that case trivially holds.
2. If x exists through something y other than itself, then the left half of the biconditional on the right of our definition is false, and so is the right half of that biconditional (since x does require something other than itself). In that case, the right conjunct on the right of the definition is true, and the “exists through” relation just reduces to the left conjunct, the “requires” relation, which, as we saw, is transitive.

In either case, therefore, “exists through” is transitive.

Finally, notice that the “exists through” relation, unlike the “requires” relation, is what logicians call “antisymmetric.” (This is not the same as being asymmetric, in the sense we discussed above.) That is, if x exists through y and y in turn exists through x , then x just is y ; they’re the same thing.

Here's why: If x exists through y and y exists through x , then by the transitivity of "exists through," x exists through x —that is, x exists through itself. But then, in virtue of our definition of "exists through," x doesn't exist through anything other than itself.

The logical machinery may be more than you're comfortable with, and is certainly more than Anselm himself was thinking of. But my point is fairly simple: We can quite clearly define what Anselm means by the "exists through" relation in terms of an unproblematic notion of one thing's requiring something for its existence. The definition we end up with is such that it is transitive, and rules out "exists through" loops of more than one item (that is, it's antisymmetric).

Now notice that so far, all we've done is to give some definitions. We have the definition of the "requires" relation, and everything satisfies that with respect to something or other, we said (even if it only satisfies it with respect to itself). But we've said nothing yet to show that there's actually anything that "exists through itself." Much less have we said anything to show that there's only one such thing. That's what Anselm is going to argue in Chap. 3. Let's look at his argument.

The argument proper

The actual argument starts by claiming that nothing exists through nothing. (*Basic Writings*, p. 9, 1st paragraph of the chapter—"For every existing thing exists either through something or through nothing. But nothing exists through nothing.") That is, everything exists through something, even if it's only through itself.

This is true, given what we've developed so far. Look back to our definition of "exists through":

$$xETy =_{df.} xRy \ \& \ (x=y \leftrightarrow (z)(x \neq z \rightarrow \sim xRz))$$

Everything x either exists through itself or it doesn't. If it does, then it exists through something. If it doesn't, then (from our definition) either (i) x does not require itself (which is false, since "requirement" is reflexive), or else (ii) the biconditional after the '&' on the right of the definition is false when $x = y$, that is, when the left half of that biconditional is true. But in that case the biconditional itself is false only if its right half is false—that is, only if x does require something z other than itself. And in that case, x exists through z , as you can verify by looking at the definition. In either case, therefore, x exists through something or other, which is what Anselm claims.

Now if everything exists through something or other, then there must be (i) some one thing, or perhaps (ii) a group of several things, through which everything whatever exists. That is, no matter what you've got, it exists through something in that group. (I don't mean that it exists through everything in that group.) This is trivially true, since if you just allow the "group" in (ii) to be big enough, so that it includes absolutely everything, you've got enough.

Now what Anselm is going to try to show is that the hypothesis that such a group requires several leads to a contradiction. In short, there is some one thing through which everything exists. It exists through itself, and everything else exists through it. And we know who that is going to be, don't we? (Recall the discussion of my paper "What Is a Proof for the Existence of God?")

Now what's going on here? We can look at it like this: Basically, Anselm is looking for the smallest class of things such that everything that exists exists through something in that class. And he's going to try to show that this class consists of exactly one thing and no more.

Picture it this way: Start off with the class of all things that exist. Surely that class is large enough to do the trick. You don't have to appeal to anything else, since you've already included everything in advance. But this is presumably not the smallest class such that everything exists through something in that class. We can throw some things out and still have enough left. If $x \neq y$ but x exists through y , then we can throw x out and leave y , and still have enough left. Anything that exists through x will also exist through y (by the transitivity of "exists through"), and we've left y .

Now let's throw out everything we can throw out in this way, and we'll end up with the smallest class such that everything that exists exists through something in that class. (There's a problem coming up here, but just be patient!) How many things are in that smallest class? One or more than one? (Surely there will be at least one—since if we throw everything out, there won't be anything left, and nothing exists through nothing, we said.) Well, if there are more than one, then Anselm distinguishes three cases (*Basic Writings*, p. 9, but this is my own translation):

But if there are several [of them], either they are [all] related to some one thing through which they exist, or the same several [things] exist individually, through themselves, or they exist through one another, reciprocally.

In effect, the three cases amount to the following:

Case (α): Suppose the class consists of X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n , and they all exist through some X_{n+1} that isn't in this group. Then clearly we don't have the smallest class; we can keep X_{n+1} , and get rid of X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n , and still do the trick. (Note: This isn't really a "case" of the kind we were talking about—the "smallest class such that everything that exists exists through something in that class." All the more reason, then, to rule it out.)

Case (β): Suppose X_1, \dots, X_n are all self-existent. Then (here it is—the one place in the argument where you need something like the Platonic "One-Over-Many" assumption), they all exist through Self-Existence. Hence Self-Existence by itself would have been enough. Everything exists through one or more of X_1, \dots, X_n , and they all exist through Self-

Existence. Thus everything exists through Self-Existence. (Note that this does not imply that everything is self-existent, but only that they require something that is.) Whatever you think of that argument, let's go to:

Case (γ): Suppose X_1 exists through X_2 , X_2 in turn exists through X_3 , and in general X_{i-1} exists through X_i , until we come to some X_n that exists through X_1 . Plainly, what we have here is a kind of loop. But, in virtue of the transitivity of "exists through," this means that X_1 exists through X_n , and X_n we know exists through X_1 . But this violates the antisymmetry of "exists through." So case (γ), it turns out, can't really arise. Like case (α), this one is not really a "case" at all; it cannot arise. So the only really operative case is (β), and that's handled by the One-Over-Many principle.

Therefore, Anselm triumphantly concludes, all three ways our smallest class could turn out to have more than one member are ruled out. Hence there is only one item in that smallest class, and it exists through itself while everything else exists through it. Q.E.D.

Comments on the argument

Whatever you think of this argument, it has an interesting feature. It is an attempt to prove two things simultaneously: (i) the existence of God as a "self-existent" being, and (ii) the uniqueness of God. This is a rather interesting feature of the argument. Many attempts to prove the existence of God separate the existence-claim from the uniqueness-claim. Thomas Aquinas, for example, in one of his famous "five ways" to prove the existence of God at the beginning of his *Summa theologiae*, argues that God is an "uncaused cause." But the conclusion that there is only one such "uncaused cause" comes only much later in the *Summa*. Anselm's argument tries to accomplish both tasks at once.

There is, however, a serious objection to this argument (even apart from the appeal to something like the "One-Over-Many" Principle, which you may or may not find objectionable, depending on how much of a Platonist you are). Why does Anselm think there is any smallest class in the first place? There are classes bigger than necessary (for example, the class of absolutely everything), and classes smaller than necessary (for instance, the empty class—where we throw everything out), but is there any smallest class of things such that absolutely everything exists through something in that class?

Suppose there are an infinity of things that exists, and suppose we number things that exist, as follows: X_1 , X_2 , ..., and so on without end. (For the mathematicians among you, note that I'm not supposing that we can number all the things that exist in this way, that is, that there are only denumerably many existents. I don't need to assume that to make the present point.) And suppose we've numbered them in such a way that X_1 exists through X_2 , X_2 exists through X_3 , and in general X_n exists through X_{n+1} . So we have a kind of infinite regress. In this case, there would simply be no smallest class of the kind Anselm is looking for. We can keep throwing things out one by one, but there will always

be more to be thrown out. We can go too far, by throwing everything out at once, in one fell swoop. But we cannot get exactly what we want.

Notice that Anselm could be sure there is the smallest class he wants, if he could somehow rule out this kind of infinite regress. Hence, when you come right down to it, the argument in Anselm's Chapter 3 is really a disguised infinite regress argument for the existence of God, not essentially different in kind from arguments to be found later on in Aquinas. And, like all such arguments, there is one big question: Why can't you go on to infinity?

But even if the argument ultimately fails (and I think it does), it's more interesting than most such infinite regress arguments insofar as it has the uniqueness claim built in too.

Notice, please: the ultimate success or failure of this argument is not the real point as far as I'm concerned. The point is that this is a very sophisticated argument. There is a sharpness and edge to the argument that is unlike anything to be found earlier in the Middle Ages—and, I suspect, anywhere in the earlier history of philosophy. Anselm seems to be delighting in the “case by case” argument he develops here. We will see this sort of thing big-time when we get to his discussion of how God can and can not be said to be in space and time (*Mon.*, Chaps. 18–24).

One other thing you may want to consider about the argument in Chap. 3: Anselm considers three ways in which our “minimal” class might have more than one member (cases (α)–(γ) above). You might want to ask whether these three cases really exhaust all the possibilities. I haven't worked it out in detail, but I think the argument is probably OK in that respect. Still, it's something to consider.

In any case, at the very end of Chap. 3, Anselm goes on to identify the one being that exists through itself with the highest good he argued for in Chap. 1, and the highest great thing he argued for in Chap. 2. (You may want to ask whether this move is legitimate.)

This is in effect a familiar Platonic ordering of the cosmos, according to value.

Let's now move on to some of the subsequent chapters of the *Monologion*. I'm not going to look at all of them in great detail, but I do want to give you some idea of how they go.

Chapters 5–8

Chapter 4, as the *Monologion*'s Table of Contents suggests, is basically more of the same as Chap. 3. I won't spend any time on it.

Chapters 5–8 concern the notions of existing through something, as distinct from existing from or out of something. I want to sketch the way I understand these chapters, and you can focus on them more carefully if you want in your papers. (I hasten to add that I'm not 100% confident of my understanding of these chapters.)

The distinction in these chapters is between two Latin prepositions: per (= “through”), which the one we were talking about in Chap. 3, and ex (= “out of” or “from”).

Now this may seem to you like much ado about nothing, and in fact in a sense it is, as we'll see. For we've just seen in Chap. 3 that the supreme being alone exists through itself, and everything else exists through it. Now in Chap. 5, Anselm goes on to say that "through" and "from" can be used interchangeably, and that whenever we say something exists through something, we can also say it exists from or out of that something, and vice versa, even though—depending on what we're talking about, these expressions may be used in various ways. For instance (Chap. 6, p. 12), we may be talking about material causality and say the statue, for instance, is made through or out of (from) marble. On the other hand, we can also say the statue is made through or out of (from) the sculptor, the efficient cause. Or through or out of (from) the chisel, the instrument or tool (sometimes described as an "instrumental cause"). Some of these expressions are a little strained in English, as they are in Latin as well. But they're all serviceable, and they'll all work.

Of course (Chap. 6), the supreme being (God) isn't caused to exist at all in any of these ways. Effects exist through their causes, and yet are always in some sense posterior to and therefore distinct from their causes. But the supreme being exists only through itself, we know from Chap. 3. So the supreme being isn't caused to exist in any of these ways.

Note something here. Anselm makes no mention of Aristotelian formal or final causes. The *Physics* was not available to him.

Note also that Anselm doesn't say that God is "self-caused" or anything like that. In his vocabulary, cause and effect are always distinct.

So when we talk about the supreme being's existing through or from itself, we're not talking about causality. What we do mean we discussed back in Chap. 3.

On the other hand (Chap. 7), when we're talking about things other than the supreme being—which means when we're talking about creatures—we are talking about causality.

Note: This seems to suggest that Anselm identifies causality with existing through something other than yourself. That is, x causes $y =_{df.} y$ exists through x & $x \neq y$.

So all of creation exists through and out of (from) the supreme being, which is then their cause. But how is it their cause? Is the supreme being their material cause, their efficient cause (their "maker," as he says), or their instrumental cause? (Note: You may want to ask whether the Aristotelian formal and final causes that Anselm doesn't mention would make any difference to his overall argument here. I don't think they would.)

Instrumental causality we can rule out in this case. An instrumental cause is a contributing cause; it contributes along with something else that uses it as an instrument. But there isn't anything else besides the supreme being and creation. So the supreme being can't simply be an instrument used by some other cause to produce creation. (Of course, after the first creature is created, this argument would take some additional work.)

The supreme being, therefore, is either creation's material cause or its efficient ("making") cause. At the bottom of p. 15, Anselm argues that it can't be a material cause.

That is, creation isn't made out of the supreme being in the way the statue is made out of marble or bronze. God isn't the stuff of creation. Anselm's reason is:

But if something less than the supreme nature can exist from the matter of the supreme nature [i.e., the matter that is the supreme nature], the supreme good [recall that he identified the supreme being with the supreme good at the end of Chap. 3] can be changed and corrupted [= can be decomposed, can come apart.]

The idea here seems to be that a material cause is somehow changed in the production of its effect. The marble or bronze gets changed in causing the statue. Anselm doesn't say how it gets changed, and it's perhaps worth speculating about that. In Aristotelian terms, it gets changed by being formed or shaped by a formal cause; but Anselm doesn't seem to have any notion of a formal cause.

And besides, what's wrong with saying the supreme being is changed? Nothing we've seen so far suggests that it can't change. He says it would be "changed and corrupted," but it's not clear how that would have to follow. (The argument is pretty obscure at this point.)

Perhaps the important thing here is the passive voice: "be changed." Matter is changed in causing its effect; the marble or bronze is changed in causing the statue. It's changed by the sculptor, the "maker" or "efficient cause." So if the supreme being is the material cause of creation, something else would have to be the efficient cause of creation, and there isn't anything else besides the supreme being and creation.

I suggest this line of reasoning, although I'm not confident that's what's going on.

In any case, Anselm concludes that the supreme being is neither the material nor an instrumental cause of creation, and so can only be its "maker."

Creation as a whole, therefore, can't be through any kind of pre-existing matter. The supreme being isn't itself its matter, as we've seen, and apart from the supreme being and creation, there isn't any third thing that could serve as a kind of matter. (It might still happen, however, that the supreme being might first create matter, and then create other things out of it.)

The supreme being, therefore, "makes" creation as a whole out of nothing. (End of Chap. 7.)

That phrase "out of nothing" is really, I think, the whole point of this discussion in Chaps. 5–8. The standard Christian doctrine of creation—going back to some of the early Church Fathers—is that God created creatures out of nothing (*ex nihilo*).

Notice what we've got here: a "philosophical" proof of the doctrine of creation! This is a strong claim. There's nothing quite like the Christian notion of creation in Greek philosophy. For example, creation is not like Plato's account in the *Timaeus*, where something Plato calls the "Demiurge" (= craftsman) produces the familiar world out of a kind of pre-existing "matter" (what Plato mysteriously calls the "Receptacle"), using

patterns the Demiurge finds in the equally pre-existing Forms. The Christian notion of creation is not like that. (For more details, see my *A Survey of Mediaeval Philosophy, Version 2.0, August 29, 1985*, Vol. 1, Chap. 4.) For what it's worth, recall that Anselm may have had access to Chalcidius's translation or and commentary on the first part of the *Timaeus*. And note that what Anselm is arguing for in this chapter, although it's in effect the doctrine of creation, is being argued without any appeal to Scripture or revelation.

But now we've got a problem (Chap. 8). All along we've been saying that all things besides the supreme being exist through the supreme being, and therefore out of or from the supreme being. But now we're saying that they are out of nothing. How can we say both?

Certainly the supreme being isn't nothing. And besides, nothing exists through nothing, as we saw in the proof back in Chap. 3.

Anselm's reply (p. 16) is that there are three ways of saying that something is made out of or from (Latin: *ex*) nothing:

1. x is made out of nothing = x isn't made at all. (Non-existent creatures are like this, and the supreme being itself is like this.)
2. x is made out of nothing = x is made out that which is nothing. (Better translation: nothing itself.) As if nothingness were a kind of cause. He says we can think this and say this, but it can never be true of anything. (Note for future reference in our discussion of the "ontological argument" in the *Proslogion*: Anselm is explicitly saying we can think of things that aren't possible.)
3. x is made out of nothing = x is made, but there is not any thing out of which it is made.

It's in the third sense that we say that creatures are made out of or from (*ex*) nothing. But there's still a problem, because we earlier said that creatures exist and are made through and so out of or from the supreme being. As a result, Anselm goes on to give us what might be considered a kind of sub-sense of (3):

- 3a. x is made out of nothing = x is made and is now something, but earlier it was nothing. (So the "from" or "out of" [*ex*] is here being read in a temporal sense.)

And this is the sense in which creatures are made out of nothing. And it's in this sense that I said earlier this whole discussion in Chaps. 5–8 was in a way "much ado about nothing."

Chapters 9–12

In Chapters 9–12 we learn that the supreme being has a mind or reason. This is going to lead ultimately into a discussion of the Trinity. But Anselm breaks off the discussion at

the end of Chap. 12, in order to talk about other things, before coming back to it in Chapter 29 or thereabouts.

In Chap. 9 (p. 17), Anselm claims that a maker makes something rationally (“reasonably”) iff it already has in its mind a kind of exemplar (a kind of “plan” for it), that it is reasonable to suppose that a maker makes something only if it already has in its mind a kind of exemplar (a “plan” for it).

As it stands, the text allows that a maker might make something without an exemplar; it would just not be a rational thing to do. (I’ve checked the Latin on this.) But I think Anselm really means something stronger: that it isn’t reasonable to say that a maker can make something any other way than with a plan.

That is, “reasonably” or “rationally,” I suggest, isn’t really about what the maker does. Rather, it’s about what it’s “reasonable” to say or to suppose. And the idea is that it isn’t reasonable to say a maker proceeds without a plan. (Otherwise, there doesn’t seem to be any connection between the observation at the beginning of this chapter and the remark at the end of it.)

Not that all this amounts to saying that efficient causality is always conscious causality, that efficient causes work by design.

This is actually a fairly plausible view, and one with which I am in considerable sympathy. John Locke and George Berkeley recognized that the only good notion we have of causality (= efficient causality for them) comes from the experience of our own wills. Anselm’s picture then seems to be the same: efficient causes are conscious, purposeful causes. What we nowadays think of as unconscious efficient causes (the fire heating the water, the billiard ball striking and moving a second billiard ball) are really what Anselm would call instrumental causes.

For Anselm, then, the supreme being is an efficient cause (see Chapters 5–8), and is therefore rational. But so are human beings, and angels, and whatever other rational agents there are.

In Chap. 10, Anselm speaks of the supreme being’s plan or exemplar as a kind of “verbalization” (*vox*) of the creature that is going to be made. What he’s doing here is leading right up to the notion of the second person of the Trinity as the Divine “Word,” a notion that goes back to Saint John’s Gospel, the beginning of which reads:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John then goes on to say that this “Word” is that according to which all creatures were made.

Anselm distinguishes three types of “words”—*voces*, plural of *vox*, translated as “utterance(s)” by Williams (pp. 17–18):

1. Spoken or written words, or in general linguistic signs. These words will of course vary from language to language.
2. Mental images of those spoken or written words. (This is what happens when rehearse a speech silently, for instance.) These words will likewise vary from language to language.
3. A kind of “word” that does not have anything to do with “natural language,” but is simply a kind of imagining or conceptualizing of the objects themselves.

The supreme being’s “verbalization” of creation is this third type of word. (God doesn’t think in Latin or Greek or Hebrew, after all.)

Incidentally, this passage is an important text in the development of the later medieval theory of mental language.

So the supreme being, in a way, proceeds as does a human artisan who, before he makes something, has a kind of mental plan of what he’s going to make.

In Chap. 11, Anselm observes that there is nevertheless an important dissimilarity between the supreme being and a human artisan in this respect. Human artisans construct their plans on the basis of things they’ve already experienced; you plan how to build a bicycle, for instance, by ingeniously combining your already acquired knowledge of wheels, chains, seats, etc. But for the supreme being, there was nothing else in advance to serve as the basis for a plan. Therefore (p. 19):

... the things that are created through the Creator’s utterance are nothing at all but what they are through his utterance ...

In Chap. 12, Anselm observes that the “word” (= the mental plan) of this supreme being is nothing other than the supreme being itself. He doesn’t really give any argument, but it’s not hard to supply one. The supreme being’s “word” has to be identical with the supreme being itself. For the “word” is supposed to be the plan according to which the whole of creation is produced. But if the “word” were not identical with the supreme being, it would have to be a creature, and so would itself require a plan. In short, if it were not identical with the supreme being, it couldn’t do the job it’s supposed to do.

Chapters 13–14

We don’t need to pause over Chaps. 13–14 very long. Chap. 13 remarks that everything that continues to exist, continues to exist through the supreme being. That is, we don’t just need the supreme being to get things started, but also to keep them going.

Chap. 14 may at first be confusing. The title claims (p. 20) that the supreme essence “exists in all things and through all things,” but then goes on to say that all things are from, through and in it. Now we’ve already talked about how everything that exists exists through and out of (= from) the supreme being. But we also said that the supreme being

doesn't exist through anything besides itself. So how can we now say it is through all things? Aren't we contradicting ourselves? (There's an additional question about "in.")

I think all that's happening here is that Anselm is momentarily using the "exists through" talk in a looser way than he has been. Look at how he begins his argument in this chapter (p. 20): "... where he [= the supreme being] does not exist, nothing exists."

The idea here is simply that since everything exists through this one thing, unless that one thing is somehow present, nothing can exist at all. (We'll talk in a little bit about just what kind of "presence" this requires.) In that sense, then, the supreme being is "in and through" all things—it is through them in the sense of being throughout them; it pervades them. Everything is, so to speak, soaked in the supreme being, which has to be somehow "present" where anything at all exists. It doesn't mean the supreme being somehow depends on other things.

Now even though we just said the supreme being is in a sense in all things, we can also turn it around and say all things are in it. They are in it in the sense that they do not in any way escape it, they are within its realm or range, they are not beyond it; they are not "outside" it, because in that case they could not exist at all. As he says, "... where he does not exist, nothing exists."

All that's happening in this chapter is that Anselm is being a little rhapsodic and poetic. It would be dead wrong to read this chapter as implying any kind of pantheism on Anselm's part.

Chapters 15–16

I'm not going to spend a lot of time on Chaps. 15–16, although they are very important for Anselm's overall project. They are discussed fairly well in Leftow's Chap. 6 and the first part of Mann's Chap. 11 in the *Companion*.

I said earlier that I didn't like Leftow's article, and I don't, but not because of its content. It's the style I object to. For example, on p. 137, he quotes Anselm's *Monol.* 15:

... but in some cases the negation is in some respect the better; for example not-gold than gold. For it is better for a man to be not-gold than to be gold.

Leftow then feels compelled to lecture us in schoolmaster-fashion about proper usage:

Anselm's example is not entirely apt. A man cannot be golden. Someone who tried to turn a man to gold would instead replace the man with a golden statue. So it cannot be better for a man to be non-golden than to be golden, any more than it can be better for him to be non-golden than to be

a round square. You can be better off being F than being G only if you can be F and can be G.

That may very well all be correct, although I don't think it's nearly as settled as Leftow says. But in any case, it presupposes substantive metaphysical views about natural kinds. Does Anselm buy those views? Perhaps, but Leftow hasn't given us any evidence to think so. Furthermore, Leftow is talking about turning one thing into another, whereas Anselm is talking about being one thing as opposed to being another—nothing about change at all. Does that affect the issue? Who knows—Leftow just passes over it.

Isn't Anselm's point pretty clear? Isn't he just saying it's better to be a human being than to be gold? And in fact Leftow himself says right after the passage I just quoted: "Still, what Anselm has in mind is clear enough."

But if the point is clear enough, why scold Anselm for not putting the point Leftow's way, a way that—as I said—presupposes substantive views about natural kinds that there's no evidence Anselm shared?

Why am I making a big deal out of this? Because I think this style of dealing with an historical author is rigged in advance. It assumes that we know what the correct views are on fundamental issues (like natural kinds), and therefore what the author should have said and how he should have put his point. In short, it is rigged in advance to guarantee that we'll never really learn anything important from our author.

(Still, you can get a lot out of Leftow's paper.)

Now—back to Chaps. 15–16. I said I wasn't going to spend a lot of time on them, but I do want to say a little.

Chap. 15 is entitled "What can and cannot be said of him [= the supreme essence] substantially." There's an important distinction drawn in this chapter between substantial or essential terms and relative terms. Let's start with relative terms.

A relative term, in this context, doesn't necessarily mean a "polyadic relation" in the sense of modern logic—that is, a two-or-more place expression that links several things. E.g., "x is to the left of y" or x is between y and z." Those will normally count as "relative" terms, but the notion here is broader than that and goes back to Aristotle's *Categories*, which Anselm had access to through Boethius.

A relative term is a term that is attributable to something in a way that doesn't depend just on the structural or metaphysical features of that thing, but also on the features of other things. One standard example is 'father'. Notice I say 'father'—not 'father of', which is a two-place relation in the sense of modern logic. No, just 'father'.

You can take a man and so to speak dissect him metaphysically, making a list of all the components and ingredients of him. You won't be able to tell that way whether he's a father or not. Whether he's a father depends on the existence of a child (at least the one-time existence—perhaps the poor thing died). So 'father' is a relative term.

(‘Father of’ is also a relative term. You can’t tell just by looking at Abraham whether Abraham is the father of Isaac. But that kind of polyadic relative term is fairly familiar to us from modern logical lingo, and my point now is only that Anselm’s usage is broader. It’s also quite standard usage until much later, probably the 19th c.)

Now, in Chap. 15, Anselm is talking about what can be said of the supreme being in terms of substance or essence, and he contrasts those terms with relative terms. Now it’s important to understand that these do not exhaust the alternatives. That is, if a term can be attributed to something, but it’s not a relative term, that doesn’t necessarily mean it’s an essential or substantial term. There are also accidental terms, which Anselm talks about in Chap. 25, among other places.

In short, if you metaphysically dissect something, and make a list of all its components and ingredients (so that we’re ignoring relative features), they won’t necessarily all be essential or substantial ingredients; some of them may be accidents.

What’s the difference between essence and accident in Anselm? That’s not altogether clear. In Aristotle, I think there’s a fairly good metaphysical notion of what the difference is, but what you don’t get even in Aristotle is any reliable criterion for checking whether a given term is an essential or an accidental term. Whether Anselm has even got the metaphysical notion that Aristotle has is not clear to me, but he certainly doesn’t have—any more than Aristotle had—any practical criterion.

However this works out in Anselm, let me warn you about a possible pitfall when you see this essence/accident lingo: Don’t think the distinction is between the features a thing must have in order to be the kind of thing it is (the essential features), and those it may or may not have and still be the kind of thing it is. That is, don’t just think the distinction is the distinction between the necessary and the contingent features of a thing, given that it exists. That’s a modern, analytic way of drawing the distinction, and it’s usually anachronistic to apply it to the Middle Ages.

OK, so in Chap. 15 Anselm is talking about what can be said essentially or substantially about the supreme being. And, as Leftow discusses (p. 138), the upshot is that we can essentially attribute to it any perfection, and we cannot essentially attribute to it any non-perfection. I refer you to his discussion to see how this goes.

(I hasten to add that the expression ‘perfection’ is not Anselm’s; Anselm doesn’t use “perfection”-talk. But Leftow defines what he means by a “perfection” in terms of what Anselm does say, so that’s OK.)

And so we get, in one fell swoop at the end of Chap. 15 (*Basic Writings*, p. 23):

He must therefore be living, wise, powerful and all-powerful, true, just, happy, eternal, and whatever similarly it is absolutely better to be than not to be.

What we have here is in effect a list of some perfections. And it presupposes a broadly “Platonic” value-ranking.

OK, now in Chap. 16, we get an important move. We've just seen a partial list of perfections, and we know now that they can all be said of the supreme being essentially or substantially. Chap. 16 now tells us that the supreme being is identical with all these perfections. Look at the title (p. 23):

That for him, to be just is the same as to be justice, and the same thing holds for those things that can be said of him in a similar way [i.e., essentially or substantially] , ... [In short, it holds for all those "perfections" we just saw listed at the end of Chap. 15.]

The rest of the title may at first puzzle you:

... and that none of these designates what sort of thing or how great he is, but rather what he is

This is in effect a reference again to the Aristotelian theory of the *Categories*. The Latin for 'what sort' is quale, and the answer to a "'what sort?' question" is a quality. So too, the Latin for 'how great' is quantum, and the answer to a "'how great?' question" (either in the sense described in Chap. 2 or in the sense "how much?", "how many?") is a quantity. Again, the Latin for 'what' is quid, and the answer to a "'what is it?' question" is a quiddity, which is just another way of saying essence or substance. Now, quality, quantity, and substance are three of the famous Aristotelian categories.

Aristotle's *Categories* lists ten categories in all: substance, quantity, quality, relation, where, when, "position" (which doesn't mean where, but something more like orientation), having, action, and "passion" (being passive). Let's not worry for now about what all these are.

It's curious that Aristotle himself discusses only the first four of these "categories" at any length (substance, quantity, quality, relation). The remaining six are treated in a few offhand lines at the end of *Cat.* 9.

Now Boethius (together with a number of other early commentators on Aristotle) regarded only the first four categories, the ones Aristotle spends time on, as really ontological categories, corresponding to entities in the world; the other six are just "manners of speaking," verbal categories. And Anselm, we know, had access to Boethius's views on this.

So, what the end of the title of *Monologion* Chap. 16 is telling us, then, is that those "perfections" we've just identified with the supreme being are not qualities ("what kind?") or quantities ("how great?", "how many", "how much?"). And we already said back in Chap. 15 that we weren't talking about relatives. So the only real thing left we can be talking about is quiddity ("what is it?")—that is, essence or substance. In effect, then, the end of the title just reiterates the point in Chap. 15, that we're concerned now with what we can say essentially or substantially about our supreme being.

The actual argument in Chap. 16 is fairly straightforward, with a wrinkle. The wrinkle comes on p. 29:

... whatever he is—whether good or great or subsistent—he is through himself and not through another.

Note that, back in Chap. 11 (p. 19), we learned that creatures are whatever they are through the supreme being, but there was nothing there about the creator's being what it is.

At first, this claim looks like just a restatement of what we learned back in the argument in Chap. 3 about “exists through,” and Williams adds a footnote (p. 23 n. 13) referring back to those opening chapters. And, with respect to “subsisting” as Anselm lists it here, I suppose it is. (As Williams explains in his “Glossary,” to “subsist” is just to “exist” as a substance.) But what about “good” and “great”? We know that the supreme being is essentially good and essentially great (from Chap. 15), but where do we get the claim that it is good and great through itself?

The only way I can think of is if we have a kind of unstated premise here, to the effect that:

if x is essentially ϕ , then it exists through ϕ -ness.

We already know from the One-Over-Many Principle back in Chaps. 1–2 that if something is good it is good through goodness, and if it is great it is great through greatness. But what we’re saying in this unstated premise is that if something is essentially good, then it isn’t just good through goodness; it exists through goodness.

As I said, this is unstated; but I think something like this is needed if the argument is going to go through. And it will go through in that case: The supreme nature is essentially good, great, just, etc. By our unstated principle, therefore, it exists through goodness, greatness, justice, etc. But we know from Chap. 3 that the supreme nature exists through nothing besides itself. Therefore, the supreme nature just is goodness, greatness, justice, etc.

This is a famous doctrine, and was held by lots of other people in the Middle Ages. And it raises a host of serious problems. For, as we know from the One-Over-Many Principle in Chap. 1, all good things are good through goodness, and all great things are great through greatness, etc. But now we learn that goodness and greatness, and all those other perfections too, are identical with one another and with the supreme being. But look at the end of Chap. 16 (p. 24), where Anselm again gives us a list of perfections—this time including things like life, justice, truth, beauty and immortality. Are we supposed to say that all just things are just through immortality—even though not all just things are immortal? or that all true things are true through life, even though as we’ll see in Anselm’s *On Truth* not all true things are alive? The answer has to be yes, and the problem then is to make sense of that. This is a problem that will continue throughout the Middle Ages, and for that matter today in a certain type of philosophy of religion.

Chap. 17

Chapter 17 argues that the supreme being (that is, the good in virtue of which all things are good, and which is the standard and measure of all good things, and all the other things we've established about it so far) is "simple." That is, there's no internal structure to it; it's not composed of parts.

Note two things here:

1. First, whatever the doctrine of the Trinity means in the end, it's generally interpreted as not violating this kind of divine simplicity.
2. Second, note that if this simplicity can be established, then it also follows that the supreme being is not a material object, since material objects are always of a certain size, and can therefore be divided into a left half and a right half, for instance, and so into parts. Anselm himself doesn't make this point in Chap. 17. He had already argued that the supreme being is not a material object back in Chap. 15, on the evaluative grounds that immaterial things are better than material ones. But Chap. 17 provides us with another way of arguing the same point without appealing to any ranking of values.

The argument in Chap. 17 that the supreme being is simple is itself a pretty simple argument. Recall where we ended up as a result of the "exists through" argument back in Chapter 3: the supreme being is the unique being that exists through itself alone. (Even if you don't grant Anselm his "One-Over-Many" step in the Chapter 3 argument, you still have the conclusion that there is one or more such self-existent things.) The argument in Chap. 17 then is that what is composite, made up of parts, depends on those parts. If α is made up of parts β and γ , then α depends on parts β and γ . Now β and γ are not each of them the whole of α , but are rather other than the whole of α . It follows that anything composite exists through its parts, which are other than it. And since the supreme being does not exist through anything except itself, it doesn't have parts. That's the proof.

Chaps. 18–22

Chapters 18–22 give us a rather extended discussion of how our supreme being is related to space and time. On the one hand, we say the supreme being (= God) is everywhere ("omnipresent") and exists at all times. Yet we also often speak of God as outside space and time altogether. How can we have it both ways?

Now let's pause for a moment. As always with these traditional things people have said about God, we should stop and ask ourselves why people say them. Why do people want to insist that God is outside space and time? Or at any rate that he is not in space and time in the way ordinary things are. What is at stake in maintaining this? You'd be hard pressed to say there's Scriptural authority for it. So what important doctrines are threatened if we don't put God outside space and time? I think it's always worth asking questions like that.

For example, the traditional doctrine of the simplicity of God, which we just saw in the preceding chapter. That's not in Scripture either. But we now see what's at stake in the doctrine. If God weren't metaphysically simple, he would not be independent; he would depend on things other than himself, thus compromising the doctrine of Creation, which people thought they could find in Scripture.

Well, can we find a similar pressure behind the view that God is outside space and time? I don't think the answer is entirely clear. But let's keep it in mind as we go through our discussion.

Now although the main discussion of how God is related to space and time is concentrated in Chaps. 20–22, there are some preliminaries as far back as Chap. 18. I want to look at this discussion, and particularly at Chaps. 20–22, because it illustrates at least three things:

- It illustrates once again the point I made in our discussion of the Chap. 3 argument, that you get a much more complicated and tighter kind of argumentation in Anselm than you get in the rhetorical, visionary style of philosophy we find in Augustine and others early authors.
- It also illustrates a typical mediaeval philosophical technique, one that later folks will get very good at: the art of making distinctions. “When in trouble, make a distinction.” For example, we've already seen (Chap. 8) the distinction made between three ways in which we can say something is made out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). (Of course, Renaissance anti-scholastics thought this art just showed the decadence of mediaeval thought.)
- It more or less illustrates the *quaestio*-form. This is a format for that became virtually the default format for discussing any topic in the later Middle Ages. It goes like this: First you state a question or issue on which there are two sides. Then you rehearse the arguments available for the one side of the question, followed by the arguments for the other side. After setting out the arguments for the two sides, the author gives his own view on the question, followed by replies to the arguments for the losing side.

This pattern is obviously very much like what happens in a court of law, where both sides present their case and then a verdict is handed down. (There usually isn't a “reply” to the losing side in a law-court, however.) As I said, it became virtually the default format for discussing anything in the later Middle Ages. Thomas Aquinas's massive *Summa theologiae*, for instance is a tissue of one *quaestio* after another in this format. You find discussions in this format in theology, law, medicine, physics—virtually everywhere.

The discussion in Anselm's *Monologion*, Chaps. 20–22, is an early example of this pattern. But it is not the very first. We can find earlier examples as

well. For instance, in Boethius's mysterious treatise *De hebdomadibus* (= "On the Hebdomads," whatever they are).

With those preliminaries, then, here we go:

Chapter 18

In Chapter 18, we get an argument that the supreme being has no beginning in time, and no end in time either. The argument is this: Suppose it began to exist in time. (That is, suppose there are times t_1 and t_2 , with t_1 earlier than t_2 , such that the supreme being doesn't exist at t_1 but does exist at t_2 . This will work whether you regard t_1 and t_2 as instants or as intervals of time.) Then, Anselm says, in that case we can ask where it came from—not in a spatial sense, of course, but in a causal sense. What made the supreme being come to be at a certain time, what made it begin to be? There are three alternatives, each one absurd, he says:

(a) It didn't come from anything. That is, it did come into being, began to exist, but there's nothing from or out of which, or through which (our prepositions ex and per, again), it came into being. This is absurd on the general principle: You don't get something from nothing. There's no ontological "free lunch."

We haven't seen this principle appealed to before, although it's reminiscent of the claim we've seen back in Chap. 3, that nothing exists through nothing, and the claim in Chap. 4 that per and ex can be used interchangeably.

But that was about existing through, or existing out of or from, not—as here—about coming to be through, or coming to be out of or from. And it's not at once clear how the notion of existing and the notion of coming to be are related.

Yet, if we haven't seen the principle that you can't get something from nothing before, it still seems like a plausible principle in its own right. (Compare the third sense of being made ex nihilo [= "out of or from nothing"] we saw back in Chap. 8, p. 16.)

(b) It came into being through something other than itself. But then its existence would be derived. It would depend for its existence on that something else, and as a result it wouldn't be a self-existent being, which we know it is (from Chap. 3). (Note: This argument seems to presuppose that coming into existence from another \rightarrow existence through another! Is there any reason to believe that?)

(c) It came into existence through itself. Note that this doesn't just mean it would exist through itself. We already know it does that. What we're talking about here is something more: that the supreme being came

into existence through itself, gave itself existence. But—here’s another inviolable ontological principle that we haven’t seen before, but that seems pretty good: You can’t give what you don’t have to begin with, and you can’t get what you’ve already got. So the supreme being would have to exist already, in order to give itself existence. But then of course it wouldn’t need it. It would have to exist before it began existing, which is absurd.

Since all three alternatives are absurd, Anselm concludes by *reductio* that the supreme being doesn’t begin to exist in time after all. In short, it always existed.

But what about coming to an end in time? Can the supreme being temporally cease to exist? Notice that you can’t use the same kind of argument here. For while you can’t give what you don’t have to begin with, you certainly can lose what you do have to begin with. So Anselm has to adopt a different approach here, and he does.

He adopts an approach that is reminiscent of a very strange argument for the existence of God St. Augustine gives in his *On Free Choice of the Will*, Book II, an argument that proceeds by identifying God with truth. (We’ll see something like this in Anselm’s own *On Truth* later on.)

This new argument simultaneously gives a second argument that the supreme being did not begin to exist in time either. In other words, this new approach can be applied both to beginning and to ending in time, whereas the former argument only works for beginning. The new argument is this:

Truth didn’t begin in time, and won’t end in time either. There neither was nor will be a time when there isn’t truth. For consider: it’s now true that I’m saying these words, on such and such a day at such and such a time. Hence, Anselm argues, it always was true in the past that I would be saying these words on this date at this time. That is, whether anybody knew it or not, the truth ‘Spade will be saying such and such on day *d* at time *t*’ was true at every time in the past, and therefore truth—at least that truth—always existed in the past.

Note: This is not an “eternal truth” in the sense in which people sometimes talk about “eternal truths” as being without tense. (Boethius may have had such a notion, and is often interpreted that way, although that’s probably wrong.) The truths we’re talking about now very much have a tense. It’s just that their truth value doesn’t change over time—at least not up until the present time, when I actually do say these words, and it’s no longer true that I will say them on day *d* at time *t*.) So, at every time in the past there was at least that one truth.

So too, in the present (on day *d* at time *t*), it is true that I am saying these words, and so once again, there is at least that truth.

Similarly, it will always be true ever after in the future that I was saying such and such on day *d* at time *t*. There will never be a time when there won’t be at least that truth. Hence,

at every time in the past, present and future, there is at least some truth or other. In short, truth in general has no beginning or end in time.

Anselm may well have taken this part of his argument straight from Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will*. In any case, at the end of Chapter 18, Anselm unceremoniously identifies the supreme being with truth (that is, with something like the Form of the True in Plato's sense, namely, that in virtue of which all true things are true), reminiscent of Augustine's move. This move is OK, in virtue of what we've already said in Chaps. 15–16.

But the argument doesn't really need this identification. We might instead argue less ambitiously, like this: **Either** the supreme being is truth in this way, and in that case since, as we've just seen, truth has no beginning or end in time, therefore the supreme being has no beginning or end in time either (Q.E.D.); **or else** the supreme being is not identical with truth, and in that case truth must exist through the supreme being, since everything does that, as shown in Chap. 3. But in that case, whenever there is truth, you also have to have the supreme being, to support it. (Compare the discussion in Chap. 14 earlier, about how the supreme being is in and through all things.)

Therefore, whether or not the supreme being is to be identified with truth, it follows that since truth has no beginning or end in time, neither does the supreme being. This isn't quite the way Anselm argues in Chapter 18, but it's by no means a non-Anselmian argument. In fact, it's similar to an argument we'll see in just a moment.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19 is another discourse on "nothing." We've just seen that the supreme being always was and always will be, that it neither begins nor ends in time, and therefore there is nothing before it and nothing after it in time. Anselm explains that we don't mean by this that there was a time before the supreme being such that there was not anything that existed then, and that there will be a time after the supreme being such that there will not be anything that exists then. Rather, all we mean is that it is not the case that there was something before the supreme being or that there will be anything after it. In effect, what he is doing is distinguish between whether the negation or the temporal adverb has what logicians would call the "greater scope." We don't need to spend any more time on it than that.

(The distinction here is between: "*Before it, it is not the case that there is something*"—which is false—and "*It is not the case that before it there was something*"—which is true.)

Chapter 20

All this is background. The supreme being is simple (Chapter 17), and doesn't begin or end in time (Chapter 18). Anselm now goes on to ask how it is related to space and time.

And on this I want to call your attention to two items in the secondary literature (on E-Reserves):

- Edward Wierenga, “Anselm on Omnipresence,” and a reply to Wierenga:
- Brian Leftow, “Anselm on Omnipresence.”

Both appeared in *The New Scholasticism*. (“Scholasticism” in this context does not mean “scholarliness.” The journal is basically devoted to medieval philosophy, even though the “schools” usually associated with “scholasticism” didn’t arise until roughly a century after Anselm.)

The argument in this part of the *Monologion* takes the form of a dilemma. In Chapter 20 Anselm argues what appears to be the case about the supreme being with respect to space and time. In Chapter 21, he argues that this cannot be so after all. So we have a conflict. In Chapter 22 he resolves the conflict by making a distinction. (Notice the rudimentary quaestio format.)

In Chapter 20, Anselm sets out three possibilities regarding the supreme being’s existence in space and time. Two of these are absurd, so that only the third is left. Either, he says, the supreme being exists

- (a) everywhere and always,
- (b) somewhere and sometime only, or
- (c) nowhere and never.

Actually, there are obviously other combinations. Why not try: somewhere only, but always, or everywhere, but only at some time and not always? You can easily adapt Anselm’s argument to handle these cases. I leave that to you as an exercise.

Alternatives (b) and (c) he argues are absurd. Consider (c). Recall that nothing exists unless it exists through the supreme being, as proved in Chapter 3. Hence wherever and whenever anything at all exists, the supreme being is somehow “present.” It must be then and there, “supporting” whatever exists then and there. I already pointed out a similar claim back in Chap. 14, where Anselm was talking about how the supreme being is “in and through” all things, and we had to ask what he meant (*Basic Writings*, pp. 20–21). In any case, if the supreme being existed nowhere and never, nothing at all would exist anywhere or ever, which is empirically false. (Remember how Anselm’s use of necessary reasons does not mean he can’t appeal to public, empirical facts.)

Similarly, consider alternative (b). Suppose the supreme being existed or was somehow present only at certain times and places but not at all of them. Then only in those times and places would anything at all exist. At other times and places, there would be strictly nothing. In fact, there would not even exist those very times and places themselves, since they too exist through the supreme being. (Exactly what does this step assume about the ontology of space and time?)

Hence, only alternative (a) remains: the supreme being exists always and everywhere. We already have independent argumentation for the “always” part of this, back in Chap. 18.

Chapter 21

In Chapter 21, Anselm goes on to ask how it can be that the supreme being exists always and everywhere, as we've just argued it does. Once again, Anselm considers some alternatives. But this time, he argues that all the alternatives are absurd.

So we have a dilemma. The supreme being has to exist always and everywhere (Chapter 20), but there doesn't seem to be any way it can do this (Chapter 21). This dilemma is resolved in Chapter 22.

OK now, what are the alternatives considered (and rejected) in Chapter 21? Here we go:

If a thing exists always and everywhere, then either (α) all of it does, or else (β) only part of it does, and the rest does not. Whatever alternative (β) might mean, it certainly doesn't apply to the supreme being, since we saw in Chapter 17 that the supreme being is simple and just doesn't have any parts. Hence, only alternative (α) is really serious.

How then can God be thought to exist as a whole always and everywhere? Well, a thing can be thought to exist as a whole always and everywhere, either insofar as:

(i) Part of it is here, part of it there, part of it now, part then, but all the times and places taken together jointly exhaust the whole. That's not as obscure as it sounds. It's in effect the sense in which we might say, for instance, that space is everywhere as a whole, and time as a whole is at all times. That is, part of space is here and part there, and if you take all the places together, you exhaust the whole of space. Likewise for time. This clearly won't apply to the supreme being, since it has no parts. (Chap. 17.)

(ii) The whole of it is here, and the whole of it there, the whole of it exists now, and the whole of it then. Only this alternative can apply to the supreme being.

Up to now, Anselm has been treating place and time together. But now he decides to treat them separately, beginning with place.

How then can a thing exist the whole of it here and also the whole of it there, and so on? There are two possibilities: (a^*) The whole of it exists in all these places at the same time, or (b^*) at different times. But (a^*) is absurd. If the whole of a thing exists in a given place, then it doesn't also exist outside that place at the same time. Otherwise, the whole of it wouldn't be in that first place. Similarly, (b^*) is absurd in the case of the supreme being. If the supreme being wholly existed here at this time, and there at that time, then there would be certain times when the supreme being didn't exist at a given place. But we've already seen this is absurd. Nothing at all would exist at those places at the times the supreme being did not exist there—not even the places themselves would exist then.

A slightly different argument will apply in the case of time. Either ($a \uparrow$) the supreme being exists at all times at once, or ($b \uparrow$) it exists at the various times in succession. But ($a \uparrow$) is absurd, since times simply don't come all at once. Yet ($b \uparrow$) is absurd too, in the case of the

supreme being, because if it existed at the various times in succession, then it would have to have temporal parts: at time t_1 one part of the supreme being would exist, and at time t_2 a later part of it would exist. (Note: Anselm seems to be here thinking of an individual as being somehow identified with its personal “history.” My future and my past are different “parts” or time-slices of me. This notion will have a distinguished future in Leibniz, not to mention more recent physics.) But this can be ruled out in the case of the supreme being, since it doesn’t have parts in the first place (Chap. 17).

For a summary of the arguments in Chaps. 20–21, see the handout “Anselm on Space and Time.”

Chapter 22

So we have a real problem. At the end of Chapter 20, Anselm had shown that the supreme being has to exist always and everywhere. But now, in Chapter 21, he seems to have shown there is no way this is possible. All the alternatives are absurd. Some of them are ruled out as being absurd for any kind of thing—e.g., alternative (a); others are ruled out because of the special nature of the being we are dealing with—one that is absolutely simple and has no parts, and on which everything else causally depends (that is, through which everything else exists).

How are we to resolve this apparent contradiction? That comes in Chapter 22, and illustrates a basic move of mediaeval thinking: When you get in trouble like this, make a distinction. And so Anselm does. Here’s the distinction:

When a thing x is wholly at a place p at a time t , this can mean one of two things: (1) x is wholly present at p and t , in a sense that doesn’t exclude its also being wholly present at other places and times; or (2) x is contained in or bounded by p and t , so that x cannot also be wholly present at other places and times. (Note that the Latin word for “contain” in this argument [e.g., p. 32] is “*continere*,” literally “hold together.” I’ll say more about that in a moment.) In other words, there is an inclusive and an exclusive sense of being at a place and time. We can say ‘here and now’ to the exclusion of ‘there and then’, or we can say it without committing ourselves to ‘there and then’ one way or the other. Now when we say the supreme being is in a certain place at a certain time, and saying it in the sense in which it’s true, we’re using only the inclusive sense (1).

So in the end Anselm is adopting alternative (α) in Chap. 20 above (the supreme being exists as a whole in all places and at all times), and denies that this is really absurd, despite the argument in Chap. 21. In particular, he ends up adopting alternatives (a^*) and —I think—(b) and rejecting the arguments against them. (I have some hesitations about Anselm’s acceptance of (b), but I think I’ve got that right.) That’s his solution to the problem.

Remarks on the argument

Please note carefully that Anselm's "solution" here is not just an evasion. Our initial reaction to this argument, perhaps, is that he hasn't really done anything at all. All he's said is that there's a sense, whatever it is, in which what appears to be contradictory isn't really contradictory after all, and so the faith is saved. It's just this kind of thing, you may suspect, that gives mediaeval philosophy the reputation of being a thinly disguised attempt to make sure all the right dogmas come out true, no matter what.

But that's not what's going on at all. Anselm isn't just looking around for some spurious distinction made up on the spot. Recall the arrangement of the argument. He's forced to make some distinction, by the arguments in Chapters 20–21. Those arguments are really a demonstration that some distinction like this is necessary, that there must be some sense—even if we can't yet fully fathom how it works, there must be one—in which things can be wholly at a given place and time, and yet wholly at a different place and time. In other words, there must be some sense of being in a place and a time different from the workaday, garden variety sense in which we say things are in a place at a time.

It's important to remember that the arguments in Chapters 20–21 (and for that matter, the preliminary arguments in Chapters 17–18, and the "exists through" argument way back in Chapter 3) are purely philosophical arguments. There's no appeal to the faith, no flinging around of Scripture verses—it's all just pure reason and publicly verifiable empirical facts (recall the one step where we noted that some things do exist at some times and places). A hard-nosed opponent might disagree with Anselm's arguments, but he'd have to admit that at least they're the right kind of arguments to appeal to a philosopher in the strictest sense, as distinct from the theologian. Given this, and given the dilemma that is the outcome of Chapters 20–21, just what was Anselm supposed to do? From this point of view, the distinction drawn in Chapter 22 is the only philosophically responsible move he could have made!

The moral of the story here is that we should always be careful about accusing a philosopher of being "*ad hoc*." What may look initially like a totally *ad hoc* move usually has some kind of reasoning behind it. We may not like the reasoning, and it may in fact be bad reasoning. But there is usually some reasoning there. In fact, I think it would repay out time and effort to think long and hard about just what we are saying when we call a philosophical view or move *ad hoc*.

Let me make some final remarks about the argument we're discussing here. **(1)** First, just a little fact to file away, which has applications in medieval philosophy beyond Anselm. Notice the etymology of the word 'contains' that occurs in the argument in Chap. 22. (I said I would come back to this.) Literally and etymologically, 'contains' means "holds together." This is what it means, for instance, for a cup to "contain" a quantity of liquid; it "holds it together" and keeps it from running all over the table and making a mess. It's only a small extension of this to speak, for instance, of an envelope as "containing" a letter. It doesn't "hold the letter together" as though the letter would suddenly fly apart if it were taken out of its envelope. But it does "hold it together" in the sense that the

enclosed letter is not also somewhere else. It's "in" the envelope in the exclusive sense of the word.

Here's an application of this point. When we speak about the usual theories of the relationship between soul and body, we nowadays tend to say the soul is "in" the body. Recall for example the Platonic-Augustinian notion that the soul is "in" the body like a captain in his ship, or like a ruler in his city. Now the soul is certainly not in the body in the inclusive sense of "in" distinguished in Chap. 22. That is, while the soul is in the body it cannot also be somewhere else—at least not on the usual theories. But you will find people in the Middle Ages who do want to say the soul is not "in" the body in the exclusive sense either. That is, the body does not "contain" the soul, "hold it together." On the contrary, it's the other way around: it's the soul that contains the body. An Aristotelian/Thomistic theory, for instance, in which the soul is the substantial form of the body, giving it its structure and unity, would fit this manner of speaking very well. It's not the body that holds the soul together; rather, it's the soul that holds the body together. Hence, you'll sometimes find people saying that the soul "contains" the body. (There's a passage in Aquinas like this, for instance.) And my reason for bringing all this up is simply so that you won't be surprised or puzzled if you see such claims in your philosophical studies. There's nothing especially mysterious about it once you see that it all rests on a simple point of etymology.

(2) Second, recall the argument in Chapter 20 for why the supreme being must exist always and everywhere. Basically, it was that, if there is a place and a time in which it didn't exist, then nothing at all would exist in that place at that time—including the very place and time themselves. The reason for this is that all other things exist through the supreme being, depend on it. This dependence, as we've seen, is causal. Remember, back in Chap. 7, where I observed that Anselm seems to identify causality with existing through something other than yourself: $x \text{ causes } y =_{\text{df.}} y \text{ exists through } x \text{ and } x \neq y$.

So the argument in Chap. 20 that the supreme being must exist always and everywhere seems to be implicitly assuming that the effects of the supreme being cannot exist when or where their cause, the supreme being itself, doesn't exist. In short, the hidden premise behind Chapter 20 seems to be that there is no causal action at a distance, either local or temporal distance. Cause and effect must be spatially and temporally contiguous.

Given this, one obvious way out of the dilemma Anselm finds himself in after Chaps. 20–21 would be simply to deny that there can be no action at a distance. This is a move that would appeal to modern sensibilities, perhaps, since—after all—nowadays we don't think causes have to be contiguous with their effects. Think of all the effects the sun has, for instance, on earth. Yet the sun is 93 million miles away in space. And, given the speed of light, that means it fails to be contiguous in time by about eight minutes.

Now at first it may appear that by accepting the conclusion of Chap. 20—that the supreme being must exist always and everywhere, the argument for which (we just said) relied on the contiguity of cause and effect—Anselm is in effect rejecting the solution I've just suggested and insisting on cause/effect contiguity anyway, and therefore we

don't really have to take what he does here seriously, because it relies on an antiquated notion of causality.

But when you think about it a little longer, is that the way to think of it? After all, all we really need in order to satisfy Chap. 20 is some way of saying that causes are "present" when and where their effects are felt. And if that's all we mean by cause/effect "contiguity," then in that sense even we nowadays can cheerfully say that the sun is "present" here on earth and the American Civil War is still "present" even now—insofar as their effects are felt. So too, the supreme being exists always and everywhere because its effects are felt always and everywhere. And that's all the inclusive sense of being in a place at a time really requires.

Can't we just then say that what Anselm does in Chap. 22, with the distinction between an exclusive and an inclusive sense of being in a place at a time, amounts in effect to reinterpreting the requirement of cause/effect contiguity so that it no longer means what we initially thought it did, coming at this question from the perspective of a much later period?

(3) Third, I want to call your attention briefly to something that would surely have struck Anselm's contemporary readers, and in fact all medieval readers. His talk in Chap. 21 about how something (in particular, the supreme being) can exist as a whole, at the same time in several different places—see (a*) above, which we said Anselm accepts—sounds an awful lot like Boethius's notion of what a universal is. Boethius gave a famous account of the problem of universals in one of his commentaries on Porphyry's *Isagoge* (recall what this was), and in that account he came up with one of the standard definitions of a universal used throughout the Middle Ages:

A universal is that which can be common to several things **(a)** as a whole, **(b)** at the same time, and **(c)** in such a way as to enter their internal metaphysical make-up (their structure). (This third clause, of course, is always the hard one to interpret.)

We've now learned that the supreme being is "present" as a whole, at the same time in several places at once (in fact in all of them), in order to sustain those places and whatever exists in them. Does this mean the supreme being is a universal in the Boethian sense?

No, and the reason is clause (c). Universals have to enter into the structure of what they're common to in a closer way than what we've just been talking about with the supreme being and the sun—at least they do unless we want to say the sun is a universal too!

Nevertheless, the way in which universals are said to be wholly present at the same time in all their several instances is quite reminiscent to the way the supreme being is said to be omnipresent. So, whichever one you take to be the more mysterious—divine omnipresence or universals—you can think of it more or less in terms of the other.

(4) Finally, recall that earlier I said we should try to keep in mind what is really at stake when people talk about God as being outside space and time. Let's see where we stand on that.

When you look back, it is striking that Anselm doesn't anywhere in this discussion say that God is outside space and time. (You may want to compare what he says in the *Proslogion*, Chaps. 13 and 19, or in the *De Concordia*, to see if he says it in those places.) All he says here in the *Monologion* is that God is not "in" space and time in any sense that would confine him to a place or time, to the exclusion of other places or times. All he's worried about is that we not think of God as being "in" space and time in what we've called the exclusive sense. And the reason is because of the pressure of the doctrine of creation: everything else depends on God (Chap. 3).

I suspect, although I cannot prove, that this is really the reason too some other people do say that God is "outside" space and time—simply to ensure that he's not confined to a place or time in the way we've now learned to distinguish.

The *Proslogion*

Let's now put the *Monologion* aside for the present, and turn to the *Proslogion*, which contains the famous "ontological argument" for the existence of God. In connection with the *Proslogion*, and with the ontological argument in particular, you should also read the reply to it by one of Anselm's contemporaries, one Gaunilo (Gaunilon) of Marmoutiers, and Anselm's own reply to Gaunilo (both in *Basic Writings*). (DISTRIBUTE MAP OF MARMOUTIERS.)

We'll talk shortly about this reply and counterreply. For now, get the name straight: 'Gaunilo' and 'Gaunilon' are the only correct forms. Don't call him "Gvano" or "Galliano," or other variations I've seen!

The reason the 'n' is optional at the end of his name goes back to a point of philology. In the nominative case, the man's name is 'Gaunilo.' This is a third-declension noun, with the genitive form 'Gaunilonis'. That extra 'n' is retained in other oblique cases too. Now, in deriving words from Latin third-declension nouns, English sometimes uses the nominative, but sometimes the oblique form instead. Thus, we talk about "Cicero" the great Roman orator, based on the nominative form of his name; but we form the adjective "Ciceronian" from the genitive "Ciceronis." Again, Latin *origo/originis* = "origin." That's the end of this little language lesson!

Now the *Monologion* was written 1075–76, and you've read the story about how it came to be written. (The monks persuaded Anselm "against his will" to set down some of the arguments they'd heard him give them in conversation.)

The *Proslogion* was written about a year or so later, 1077–78, according to the chronology in Richard Southern’s biography. And he tells us in a “Prologue” (*Basic Writings*, pp. 75–76) how it came to be written too.

Unlike the *Monologion*, this time Anselm doesn’t claim the work was written only at the urging of others—that it was other people’s idea, and only more or less against his will. This one seems to have been done under his own initiative. As he tells us (p. 75), he looked back over the *Monologion*, and

... I began to wonder, when I considered that it is constructed out of a chaining together of many arguments [which is certainly a fair assessment, as we’ve seen], whether it might be possible to find a single argument that needed nothing but itself alone for proof, that would by itself be enough to show that God really exists; that he is the supreme good, who depends on nothing else, but on whom all things depend for their being and for their well-being; and whatever we believe about the divine nature.

He goes on to tell us how he puzzled and puzzled without success, and was about to give the whole project up when the solution came to him—and the rest is history.

Now think about what he’s just said. He is looking for one single argument. Most people take it for granted that the one single argument he came up with is the so called ontological argument, the proof for the existence of God in Chap. 2 of the *Proslogion*—together perhaps with the additional argument in Chap. 3 that, not only does God exist, but can’t even be thought not to exist, and the brief further discussion in Chap. 4 of how the Biblical “Fool” of the Psalms can be so foolish as to say otherwise.

And, it must be admitted, that section of the *Proslogion* (Chaps. 2–4) is certainly the most prominent and action-packed in the whole work. But look at what Anselm says his “one single argument” is supposed to do:

to show that God really exists [that happens in Chaps. 2–4]; that he is the supreme good, who depends on nothing else [you might want to say that is an implicit result of Chap. 2], but on whom all things depend for their being and for their well-being [that’s certainly not discussed anywhere in Chaps. 2–4]; and whatever we believe about the divine nature [there’s nothing that goes that far in Chaps. 2–4, although a lot of it is covered in the later chapters of the Proslogion].

What I am suggesting then is that what Anselm has in mind by his one single argument is not so much the central argument in Chap. 2, or even the cluster of Chaps. 2–4, as the whole of the *Proslogion*. Just keep that idea in mind.

One other thing about this “Prologue.” Note on p. 75, that Anselm remarks that the original title of the *Monologion* was A Pattern for Meditation on the Reason of Faith—i.e., reason for faith. In short, it’s all about those necessary reasons we talked about earlier. Note also that he calls it a pattern for “meditation,” and recall that he had earlier

written a series of “Prayers and Meditations.” So the suggestion is that, originally, the *Monologion* was regarded as simply a continuation of this series of “meditations.”

The original title of the *Proslogion*, however, was “Faith Seeking Understanding”—*fides quaerens intellectum*. Recall our earlier talk about “unless I believe I shall not understand” and “I believe in order to understand.” Those phrases appear at the very end of Chap. 1 of the *Proslogion*.

Anselm also tells us that, although these were the original titles of these two works, he eventually came to call them, for short, the *Monologion*, that is, Greek for “monologue”—or “speech made to oneself” as our translation has it (*Basic Writings*, p. 76)—and *Proslogion*, that is, Greek for “address,” “speaking to”—“a speech made to another,” as our translation has it (p. 76). And that is exactly what the *Proslogion* is—a prayer to God. Notice how the whole tone of the work is quite different from the *Monologion*’s, which isn’t addressed to anyone at all, not even to God.

Finally, where is Anselm getting these Greek titles? He didn’t know Greek. (He may have known a few words, but I don’t know of anywhere else Anselm uses Greek words.)

Roadmap of the Proslogion

As we did at the beginning of the *Monologion*, let’s just do a brief roadmap of the whole thing, by looking at the Table of Contents Anselm himself provides for us on pp. 77–78. Only this time, let’s also see how far we can correlate the chapters of the *Proslogion* with corresponding passages in the *Monologion*.

First of all, in Chap. 1, we get a kind of “mood setting” prayer/meditation to lead into the rest. Then in Chaps. 2–4, we get the centerpiece of the whole work, the ontological argument and the surrounding context. (There is nothing like Chaps. 2–4 in the *Monologion*.)

Chap. 5: “That God is whatever it is better to be than not to be” [cf. *Monologion*, Chap. 15, about what we can and cannot say of God substantially or essentially], “and that he alone exists through himself” [*Monologion*, Chap. 3] “and makes all other things from nothing” [*Monologion*, Chaps. 5–8].

Chap. 6: “How God can perceive even though he is not a body.” [That God is not a body, cf. *Monologion* 15. That he is “perceptive”—i.e., *knowing*—is not something we’ve talked about at all in the *Monologion*, although we *have* talked about his having a *plan* for creation (Chap. 9).]

Now notice Chaps. 7–11. There is nothing comparable in the *Monologion*. These chapters are attempts to reconcile apparently conflicting divine attributes: How can he be said to be “omnipotent,” even though there are lots of things he can’t do (e.g., he can’t sin). How he can be both merciful and yet impassible (that is, not subject to compassion, which would make him passive). How he can be both just and yet merciful?

In effect, what we are getting here is a short discussion of what we might call “the coherence of theism.” I said early on, when we were talking about faith and reason in Anselm, that—unlike a lot of modern writers in philosophy of religion—Anselm is not particularly interested in worrying about this kind of problem. But here he does discuss it in these chapters.

Chap. 12: “That God is the very life by which He lives and so on for similar attributes.” [This corresponds to *Monologion* 16, where we saw that God isn’t just *just*, but is identical with *justice*, and in fact identical with *all* the “perfections”—to use Leftow’s expression (*Cambridge Companion*, Chap. 6)—we say of him essentially or substantially.]

There are some other miscellaneous chapters in the *Proslogion*. But note especially:

Chap. 18 “That there are no parts in God or in his eternity, which he himself is.” [See *Monologion* 17 on divine simplicity.]

Chap. 19: “That God is not in place or time, but all things are in him.” [*Monologion*, Chaps. 14 (on being “in”), and Chaps. 20–22 (on place and time).]

The Ontological Argument

Let’s turn now at last to the centerpiece of the *Proslogion*, the ontological argument: Chaps. 2–4.

Notice first of all something I remarked on when I was talking about what it takes to be a “proof for the existence of God.” At the beginning of Chap. 2 (p. 81), we’re in the prayer-mode; it’s addressed to God. He continues to use the second-person prayer forms “Lord” and “God” that he’s been using in the preceding chapter:

Therefore, Lord, you who grant understanding to faith [recall “faith seeking understanding”], grant that, insofar as you know it is useful to me, I may understand that you exist as we believe you exist, and that you are what we believe you to be. Now we believe that you something than which nothing greater can be thought. So can it be that no such nature exists, since “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no /^{p. 82} God’”?

The reference is to the Psalms, where the Fool is so foolish as to say it twice. Our *Basic Writings* volume cites Ps. 14:1 and 53:1. The numbers in parentheses following those references—(13:1) and (52:1)—are the numbering of the Psalms in the old Latin Vulgate text, and that differs from the numbering in the Hebrew MSS, which are more commonly used nowadays.

My point, though, is that from this point on, Anselm abruptly drops the second-person form and the words “Lord,” “God”, etc., and proceeds only in terms of this one characteristic he’s picked—being something than which nothing greater can be thought.

This continues right up until the second paragraph of Chap. 3 (p. 82), when he just as abruptly switches back to the second-person prayer mode: “And this is you, O Lord our God.”

Something Than Which Nothing Greater Can Be Thought

Let’s pause over this phrase. There are several points to make about it.

(1) First of all, master it. It’s not that hard. Don’t say “something OF which nothing greater than can be thought of,” or gibberish like that. It just means “what you can’t think of anything greater than.” (I suspect the reason people have so much trouble with it is because of the turned-around ‘than which’, which is just done to avoid ending the phrase with the ‘than’.)

(2) Second, Anselm isn’t altogether mechanical about his use of this phrase. He’ll say “something than which nothing greater ...,” “that than which no greater ...,” and so on. So it isn’t strict.

(3) Third, some points of translation: There are two clusters of terms at stake in Anselm’s discussion.

One is *intelligere* or *intellectus* = “understanding” or “intellect” or “mind.” So we’ll see talk about how even the fool understands the phrase “something than which nothing greater can be thought,” and therefore it exists at least in his mind. The word here is *intellectus* and its cognates.

The other is *cogito* or *cogitare*. This is literally “to think,” as in Descartes’s *cogito ergo sum*. But, for some reason, some translators translate it “conceive” in the context of the ontological argument. So you’ll see “something than which no greater can be CONCEIVED,” or “that than which no greater can be CONCEIVED.” There isn’t any difference here at all in the Latin; it’s just a translator’s preference. (Latin does have a separate word for “conceive”—*concipere*, which Anselm does not use here.) I’ll probably sometimes say “that than which no greater can be CONCEIVED,” simply because that’s what I’m most used to.

There’s also talk about “saying in one’s heart,” and heaven only knows what that means.

My point is that, in Anselm’s own argument, Gaunilo’s reply to Anselm and Anselm’s own counterreply, there’s a lot of talk about the differences between “saying in one’s heart,” understanding, and thinking, and it’s all very confusing. But there’s no point in making it more confusing by introducing conceiving as if it were yet a distinct notion. It isn’t in this context. So don’t be any more confused than necessary.

(4) Fourth, notice that we haven’t seen anything like this notion of something than which nothing greater can be thought in the *Monologion*. There we talked (Chap. 2) about that which is “great through itself,” and through which all other great things are great. We may even get talk about how this thing is the greatest of all—that is, some kind of maximum of what actually exists (“supreme greatness”). But what we don’t get anywhere in the *Monologion* is talk that goes beyond what actually exists; we get no talk, for

instance, about something than which nothing greater can be thought. That's something new, and I suspect it was this feature that Anselm saw as the crucial difference between the arguments of the *Monologion* and the argument of the *Proslogion*.

(5) Fifth, notice the resolutely negative formulation of the phrase: “something than which nothing greater can be thought,” or “that than which no greater can be thought.” There's no suggestion here that such a thing can be thought—only that nothing greater can be thought. Whether such a thing can be thought or not, whether it can be understood or not, is something we'll have to see. But **be warned**: The title of *Proslogion* Chap. 15 is “That God is greater than can be thought”—suggesting that you cannot think of God. And you might very well object that we have to be able to think of such a thing in at least some minimal way, or else Anselm's argument can't even be stated. That may very well be true, but my point right now is that this fact, if it is a fact, isn't one built in to Anselm's very carefully negative formula.

(6) Sixth, note that Anselm did not originate this phrase. He appears to have been the first to build an argument for the existence of God on the basis of it, but the actual phrase, or something very close to it, can be found earlier. Various people have thought they've seen antecedents of the phrase in Seneca (whom Anselm didn't have access to) and other sources, but on the whole I haven't been convinced. Nevertheless, there is one absolutely certain antecedent: Augustine, *On the Customs of the Manichees (De moribus manichaeorum)*, II, 11 § 24, which describes God as a being “than which nothing better can be or be thought” (*quo esse aut cogitari melius nihil possit*). I don't know for sure whether Anselm had access to this work, but in any case there it is.

Preliminaries

The expression “ontological argument” is not Anselm's, of course. It seems to have been originated by Kant. See *Critique of Pure Reason* B 620–31, where Kant famously discusses and rejects what he calls an “ontological” argument. I have never seen any satisfactory account of why this argument is called “ontological.” To be sure, it has an “ontological” result in the sense that it tries to prove the existence of something, but then so does any other argument for the existence of God. There may also be some connection with a theory sometimes known as “ontologism,” found in Malebranche. (That's the view that God and the “divine Ideas” are the primary object of the intellect.) But that's not involved in either Anselm's version of the “ontological” argument or Descartes's. And I've never been able to figure out what that connection would be or why Kant would be thinking particularly of Malebranche, any more than, say, of Descartes or Leibniz, who seem to be the ones he mainly has in mind. So the actual term “ontological argument” is something of a mystery. But it's now widespread and generally accepted, so let's not quibble over it.

In any event, an ontological argument seems to be an argument that tries to show the existence of something (God, in particular) merely on the basis of the concept or definition of it. To put it baldly (and perhaps not entirely correctly), an ontological argument for the existence of God is an attempt to prove that God exists by definition.

As I'm sure you know, the literature on the so called ontological argument is enormous. And a lot of it, I'm afraid, is simply not very good. Indeed, I am tempted to say there has been more nonsense written about the ontological argument than about any other single philosophical topic! We'll see some of it in this course.

Let me tip my hand at the outset. I don't think the ontological argument works, and I certainly don't think Anselm's ontological argument works. Nevertheless, what the ontological argument tries to do is not stupid or silly on the face of it. The argument has too often been dismissed out of hand because it tries to argue from the mere concept of something (namely, God) to the actual existence of that thing. And that, so it's said, is impossible in principle.

Why should we think it's impossible in principle? Because if we could do that, then we could prove the existence of all sorts of crazy things? Well, hardly—although sometimes people try to say that is the issue. But from the fact that we cannot in every case deduce a thing's existence from its mere definition it by no means follows that we cannot do it quite correctly in some special cases. Surely anyone who seriously upholds the ontological argument thinks it works only because there's something quite special about the concept of God. I'm afraid what usually happens here is that the "refutation" boils down to: You can't conclude the existence of even a single thing from its concept alone, because if you could do that then the ontological argument would probably work, and we just know that can't be right. This is a refutation that has all the advantages of not actually requiring you to look at what it is you're refuting. But I'm afraid it just won't work; we can't say the ontological argument fails because if it didn't it would work!

Another line you sometimes still hear is that logical truths, conceptual or definitional truths, are analytic or *a priori*, while truths about what does and what does not exist are synthetic or *a posteriori*. This is the Humean distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact. Somehow people have got it into their collective head that this is a sharp and exclusive division, that merely thinking about something can never tell us anything at all about what does or doesn't exist in the real world.

For instance, J. N. Finlay, in his article "Can God's Existence Be Disproved?" in the famous collection *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (London and New York, 1955), tells us (p. 47):

The proofs based on the necessities of thought are universally regarded [notice the appeal to "consensus" here, rather than any actual argument or evidence] as fallacious: it is not thought possible to build bridges between mere abstractions and concrete existence.

Again, I. M. Crombie, in the same collection (p. 114):

For all existential statements are contingent; that is to say, it is never true that we can involve ourselves in a breach of the laws of logic by merely denying of something that it exists.

But this is just dogma. The idea is that analytic truths can never tell us about what does or doesn't exist in the world. As Finlay says, we cannot "build bridges" between thought and existence in that way. In Crombie's expression, "all existential statements are contingent."

Now the analytic/synthetic distinction has been subjected to much criticism—for example, in Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," and other places. But quite apart from general Quinean worries, if we just step back and think for a moment about what Finlay and Crombie are saying, it's blatantly and uncontroversially false. Consider "there exists a greatest prime number," "there exists a round square." Are those existential statements contingent (Crombie)? We quite frequently and unproblematically "build a bridge" (Finlay) between thought and reality in the one direction. We regularly conclude from an examination of a concept that turns out to be contradictory that there exists no corresponding object in reality. In other words, we frequently and without hesitating pass—"build a bridge"—from the conceptual level to the real level when what we're inferring is non-existence. Why should we not be able to do this at least in some cases when what we're inferring is the existence of something? Why the peculiar asymmetry?

No, if we just set our philosophical dogmas aside for a moment, it should be clear that these responses to the ontological argument are just evasions, attempts to dismiss the argument without actually taking the trouble to look at it in detail. But that's cheating, and everyone knows it. No self-respecting thinker can get by with shortcuts like that.

Now I've given you this little pep-talk not to defend Anselm's ontological argument (I think it fails), but to defend studying the argument—and studying it without prejudice about how it must—it just must—fail.

Different versions of the ontological argument

There are in fact at least two different kinds of "ontological arguments"—and I mean two quite different kinds of arguments. One is Anselm's argument in *Proslogion* Chap. 2 (with correlative material in Chaps. 3–4, Gaunilo's reply and Anselm's own response to Gaunilo). Another kind of ontological argument is found in Descartes's fifth *Meditation*, and touched up in his *Replies to the Objections*. (Not to be confused with a quite different kind of argument for the existence of God in Descartes's third Meditation.) Although Anselm's and Descartes's ontological arguments that try to prove the existence of God solely on the basis of the concept or definition of God, they are otherwise completely different.

Don't mix them up. Part of the requirements for this course is that at least one of your "research reports" be about the ontological argument. And by that I mean Anselm's ontological argument. People frequently lump all ontological arguments together, as though they were somehow all the same thing, and they aren't at all. Anselm's argument, for instance, proceeds by *reductio*, whereas Descartes's does not. Anselm nowhere says anything at all about existence's being a "perfection" or a "predicate." That's Cartesian

talk, not Anselmian. (Actually, Descartes talks about “perfections”; it’s Kant who talks about “predicates.”)

The difference between the two kinds of argument is important. For Anselm’s version, I maintain, fails, whereas Descartes’s can be defended. I don’t say it works. But it can be defended at least in the sense that its success, after you touch it up a bit, depends ultimately on certain modal and perhaps epistemological questions that are controversial and open. In particular, it depends on the question whether or not the notion of God is a consistent notion to begin with. (HANDOUT ON DESCARTES’S ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT.)

Anselm’s argument, as near as I can figure out, does not presuppose that the notion of God—or rather, of something than which nothing greater can be thought—is consistent. Of course, if Anselm’s argument succeeds in proving the existence of God, then it will trivially follow that the notion of God is a consistent one; but the argument doesn’t assume that to begin with.

Let’s set aside Descartes’s version of the ontological argument for now. Just remember to make sure, when you write your research report on the ontological argument, that it’s Anselm’s version you’re talking about. It’s OK to contrast Anselm with things that are said about the Cartesian argument; I just want to make sure you understand that there’s a difference, and are focused on Anselm’s argument without running it together indiscriminately with Descartes’s.

The Fool

We’ve already briefly met Gaunilo or Gaunilon, the author of a reply to Anselm’s ontological argument. Gaunilo was not one of Anselm’s monks at Bec but a monk at the nearby abbey of Marmoutier. He read Anselm’s *Proslogion* argument, and while Gaunilo admired Anselm very much and was just as steadfast in the faith as the next person, he thought he could recognize a bad argument when he saw one. So he wrote a reply, in which he tried to expose the fallacy in Anselm’s argumentation. As we’ve seen, Anselm puts his own argument in the context of the Biblical Fool of the Psalms, who “says in his heart ‘There is no God’.” The question then for Anselm was in effect “How are we going to answer the Fool?” In this context, Gaunilo entitled his own little reply *On Behalf of the Fool* (= *Pro insipiente*—*Basic Writings*, pp. 99–103). It’s generally included in anthologies or collections that reproduce the text of Anselm’s own argument. Of course, it wasn’t that Gaunilo really believed, like the Biblical Fool, that there is no God; it’s just that he thought the Fool would have had more to say on his own behalf than Anselm gave him credit for. (Fair warning: Gaunilo’s *On Behalf of the Fool* is an extremely cryptic work. The difficulties you may have with it are not just your or the translator’s fault. The Latin itself is pretty obscure, and it’s frequently hard to tell just what Gaunilo means.)

Anselm in turn wrote a reply to Gaunilo, in which he sought to defend his original argument and supplement it with some further remarks. People sometimes think they see importantly new and different arguments in Anselm’s reply to Gaunilo, but I don’t.

Anselm's reply is likewise generally included in anthologies and collections that contain Gaunilo's text and Anselm's original argument. (In our volume, it's on pp. 105–16.)

In fact, Anselm himself directed that whenever his *Proslogion* was copied out (in manuscript form), Gaunilo's *On Behalf of the Fool* and his own reply to Gaunilo should be included. It's really quite heartwarming to note how respectfully this exchange is carried out. There's none of this petty academic "scoring of points" you so often see.

There's one last point I want to consider before we start in on the argument for real: Does Anselm think his argument has the power to convince the Fool? This is of course connected to our discussion of Anselm's use of necessary reasons earlier, and of how his arguments are not supposed to presuppose the faith.

A moment ago, I described Anselm's rhetorical task in *Proslogion*, Chap. 2, as "How are we going to answer the Fool" or "What are we going to say to the Fool"? As if the ontological argument were directed against the Fool.

But that's not quite right. Remember, the whole of the *Proslogion* is a prayer. It's directed to God, not to the Fool or to anyone else. What he says when he introduces the ontological argument is not "What are we going to say to the Fool" or "How are we going to convince the Fool," but merely "can it be" as the Fool says—that there is no God. There's no suggestion here that he's trying to convince the Fool of the error of his ways. In fact, at the end of Chap. 3 (p. 83) he perhaps suggests that this is a hopeless cause:

So then why did "the fool say in his heart, 'There is no God'," when it is so evident to the rational mind that you among all beings exist most greatly? Why indeed, except because he is stupid and a fool?

On the other hand, there's also the suggestion that if it weren't for his incurable stupidity, the Fool should see the force of Anselm's argument. In Chap. 2 (p. 82) he notes that even the Fool understands the expression "something than which nothing greater can be thought"—and this is all it takes to get the ontological argument going. In other words, the Fool may be incurably stupid, but it's not just because he doesn't believe in God. The argument doesn't presuppose belief in God; all it presupposes is that you're not stupid.

How you sort all this out is an open question. Recall the suggestion I made some time ago, that perhaps Anselm thinks that fallen and unredeemed human nature is corrupted to the extent that lack of faith not only means you don't believe in God, but also affects your purely rational powers.

The Proof Itself

Let's look at the proof itself. I should tell you that my reading of the ontological argument—or at least the reading I'm going to give you now—is ultimately inspired by

David Lewis's excellent paper "Anselm and Actuality" (on E-reserves). I have a reply of my own based on Lewis's paper, called "Anselm and Ambiguity," and that is the proximate source of what I'll be saying here. (But I've smoothed it out and supplemented it for my present presentation.)

Here's the crucial text from *Proslogion*, Chap. 2 (*Basic Writings*, p. 82):

But when this same fool hears me say "something than which nothing greater can be thought," he surely understands what he hears; and what he understands exists in his understanding (*intellectus*), even if he does not understand that it exists [in reality].

Then we get a little discussion about the difference between something's existing "in the understanding" and understanding that it "exists in reality." Then, still on p. 82 we pick up again:

So even the fool must admit that something than which nothing greater can be thought exists at least in his understanding, since he understands this when he hears it, and whatever is understood exists in the understanding. And surely that than which a greater cannot be thought cannot exist only in the understanding. For if it exists only in the understanding, it can be thought to exist in reality as well, which is greater. So if that than which a great cannot be thought exists only in the understanding, then the very thing than which a greater cannot be thought is something than which a greater can be thought. But that is clearly impossible. Therefore, there is no doubt that something than which a greater cannot be thought exists both in the understanding and in reality.

Let's see if we can outline the argument as follows:

1. There exists in the understanding (or "mind"—*in intellectu*) something than which nothing greater can be thought. (Let's just agree to abbreviate that whole phrase by z, for short.)
2. Suppose, as a hypothesis for *reductio*, z doesn't exist in reality.
3. Nevertheless, z can be thought to exist in reality, and that would be greater.
4. Hence z—i.e., something than which nothing greater can be thought—is not after all something than which nothing greater can be thought. (I just thought of something greater, in step 3.) Thus, z \neq z, which is a contradiction.
5. Since the hypothesis in step 2 leads to a contradiction in steps 3–4, it must be false. Thus (by *reductio*), z does exist in reality after all.

[DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT *THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT*]

Existence in the understanding

This clever argument has several features that may misleadingly look like weaknesses, but really aren't. For example, what's this dubious business about "existing in the understanding" or "in the mind"? Anselm tells us that even the Fool understands the phrase 'something than which nothing greater can be thought' when he hears it. And so, in that sense, he says, something than which nothing greater can be thought "exists" in his understanding, although whether or not it exists in reality is quite another question.

Whatever this means, it's clear that "existing in the understanding" is supposed to be a very minimal thing. I suspect all it means is that the phrase is a syntactically well-formed nominal phrase, so that any competent speaker of the language would be able to deal with it. If that's right, then step 1 of the argument, although perhaps put rather colorfully, isn't really a controversial claim and can be reasonably granted even by the Fool. The Fool has no intention of denying that God "exists" in his understanding, if that's all it means; what he denies is that God also exists in reality.

So, if I'm right, step 1 is an extremely minimal claim. 'Something than which nothing greater can be thought' is a syntactically well-formed expression, in a way that "gooby-gooby skrimshel fot" isn't (because those aren't English words), or in the way "the between wow over to alas" isn't, because—while the words are English—they don't parse syntactically.

I want to say two things here: First of all, step 1 can't mean much more than this, or there is no reason to think the Fool is going to be forced to grant it. It doesn't imply, for instance, that the phrase describes something consistent or possible; the Fool need not grant even the possibility of this thing. After all, I can understand the expressions "round square" or "greatest prime number" too. (If I couldn't, I wouldn't be able say such things don't exist, and I wouldn't even be able to start a proof that there is no greatest prime number.)

Second, despite all that, I think it's fairly clear that Anselm did have something stronger in mind with this "exists in the understanding" talk. Anselm and Gaunilo get into it in Gaunilo's *On Behalf of the Fool* and Anselm's *Reply*, and part of the issue is over how to interpret this expression.

We'll talk about this later on, but for now I just want to pass over it—because, notice: we don't have to rely on an uncertain exegesis of the phrase 'exists in the understanding' in order to get us past step 1. For, whatever that step means, **it plays no real role in the argument at all**. It is never appealed to to justify any later step of the argument or to do anything else in it. Step 1 is certainly there in the way Anselm actually presents his argument, but it can be simply struck out without affecting the argument one way or another.

Greatness

Second, what's all this talk about being "great"? What does Anselm mean when he says God is that than which no "greater" can be thought? Well, perhaps *Monologion* 2 will help (*Basic Writings*, p. 8):

Now I do not mean great in size, as a given body is [i.e., big]; rather [I mean great in the sense] that the greater something is, the better or worthier it is, as wisdom is great.

That's the *Monologion*, of course, not the *Proslogion*. But plainly some similar notion is involved in the *Proslogion* as well. Greatness is therefore a matter of (moral?) worth. Anselm is in effect adopting a Platonic/Augustinian hierarchical picture of the universe, so that the "greater" a thing is, the higher it is in the hierarchy.

(Let me remind you here of a paper I mentioned earlier: R. Brecher, "'Greatness' in Anselm's Ontological Argument," where he argues pretty strongly that Anselm carefully distinguishes "greater than" from "better than" in the *Proslogion*. I think he makes a strong textual case here, but—oddly—he doesn't cite *Monologion*, Chap. 2, which I think is an important text. In any case, whether we're talking ontologically ["greater"] or evaluatively ["better"], we're plainly in a Platonic/Augustinian hierarchical framework.)

This fact is often regarded as the basis for an objection to Anselm's argument. That argument, it is said, gets whatever plausibility it has by presupposing that values (or the ontological rankings of things in some way) are absolute, not subjective or conventional—and worse, by presupposing a particular (basically Augustinian) ordering of these matters. Anyone who doesn't share these considerable theoretical pre-commitments, the objection concludes, doesn't have to worry about the ontological argument any further.

But let's not be so hasty. Let's suppose for a moment that you're a complete relativist about values and ontological hierarchies. You think "greatness" is entirely subjective and conventional, perhaps even arbitrary. Then go back through the argument, and wherever you see the word 'greater' substitute 'greater according to Anselm's own completely subjective standards'. (Anselm would have disagreed about their being subjective, but that's not the point. You think they're subjective, and we're talking about how you're going to assess Anselm's argument.)

Plainly, if the original argument is valid, so is this revised argument, since the validity of the argument doesn't depend on what 'greater' means; you could just replace 'greater' by the placeholder 'more- ϕ ' and still have the same formal structure of the argument.

Moreover, I think we'll see that whatever reasons the absolutist (Anselm) had for accepting the crucial Step 3 of the argument when read in terms of objective ("absolute") hierarchies, those reasons will continue to count as reasons for accepting it when read in terms of arbitrary, subjective hierarchies. The idea is that, if we're talking about a purely subjective ranking of values, then Anselm gets to make up the ranking, so that he can do it in a way that makes everything in the argument work. Of course, you get to make up

your own ranking too, and on your ranking the argument might not show anything very interesting. But so what? If the argument works for Anselm's ranking, then we have a proof for the real existence of something than which nothing greater (according to Anselm's ranking) can be thought. You can disagree with the ranking if you want (it's "subjective," by hypothesis), so that what we've proven the existence of isn't very great at all according to your own ranking. But you can't disagree with the fact that we've proven the existence of it—if the argument works. And even you must admit that Anselm's ranking, no matter how subjective it might be, is such that what we've proven the existence of looks convincingly like the traditional God we were talking about to begin with. All this holds, I say, if the argument works on Anselm's ranking.

In short, rejecting Anselm's own hierarchy of values doesn't weaken the argument in the slightest. The objection is misguided.

But that's crazy, you say. What if Anselm had arranged his values, his hierarchy, in such a way that this something than which nothing "greater" (according to his arrangement) can be thought turned out to be a giant, two-ton cabbage! Not only do I not want to call this God, even if he does, but I don't think I have to admit he's proven the existence of it either, no matter what he calls it. You can't prove the existence of two-ton cabbages, no matter how you arrange your values!

Granted. But I didn't say the ontological argument works; my point is only that whether it works or not has nothing whatsoever to do with whether it is the absolutist or the relativist about values and hierarchies who is right. If the ontological argument fails (and I think it does), it does so for other reasons.

Existence in reality

Look now at step 3 of the argument. Here Anselm says that even if z doesn't exist in reality, it can nevertheless be thought to exist in reality, and that would be greater. There are several things to note here.

First, observe that Anselm does not say existence is a "perfection" or a "predicate" or anything of the sort. He does not say anything that exists is automatically by that very fact greater than anything that doesn't—that existence is what is sometimes called a "great-making" property.

People often criticize the ontological argument for allegedly presupposing these things. Descartes's argument may presuppose them, but Anselm's doesn't. All Anselm requires is that if this thing z exists in reality, then it is greater than if it doesn't. It's no objection to say that the Devil, if he exists, is not "greater" (in the value-laden sense) than if he doesn't, that oOn the contrary, he's far worse; a non-existing Devil is not much cause for alarm, but a real one—look out! Well, perhaps, but that's irrelevant to Anselm's argument. Anselm's not necessarily saying anything at all about the relative greatness of a real vs. an unreal Devil. All he needs to be talking about is the relative greatness of a real vs. an unreal "something than which nothing greater can be thought."

Be especially careful about this in reading and writing about the ontological argument. My experience is that even otherwise careful authors miss the point on this. (David Lewis's paper "Anselm and Actuality" does not miss this point, a fact that I count among its considerable virtues!) Anselm's actual wording is ambiguous (*Basic Writings*, p. 82):

For if it exists only in the understanding, it can be thought to exist in reality as well, which is greater.

What does the 'which' refer to? Existing in reality—so that he's saying in general that existing in reality is greater than existing in the mind alone? Or that in general, existing in reality is greater than this thing's, z's, existing in the mind alone? Or is all he is saying merely that this thing's existing in reality would be greater than its existing in the mind alone?

The text, as I say, is ambiguous (and it's ambiguous in Latin too). It may very well be that Anselm himself believed one of the stronger readings. And in fact there is some negative evidence that he did: Gaunilo, in Chap. 1 of his *On Behalf of the Fool* (*Basic Writings*, p. 99), summarizes the ontological argument and says, "The argument for this claim [Anselm's argument] goes like this: to exist in reality is greater than to exist only in the understanding." That seems to be a pretty general formulation. And it's even more explicit in Gaunilo's Chap. 5 (p. 101), where Gaunilo paraphrases Anselm as saying that if something than which nothing greater can be thought did not exist in reality, "everything that exists in reality would be greater than it." My point is: in his *Reply* to Gaunilo, Anselm doesn't object to these strong readings. He thinks Gaunilo has misunderstood the argument, but he doesn't claim that Gaunilo has misunderstood him on that point. So perhaps Anselm does hold this.

But even if Anselm did believe one of the stronger readings, that fact is irrelevant, because the actual argument doesn't require that. Look at the formulation in the handout; all we need to get our *reductio* is the minimal reading: for this thing to exist in reality would be greater than for it to exist in the mind alone. Or—since we don't even need to use the "exists in the mind" talk, we can just say: for this thing to exist in reality would be greater than for it not to exist in reality.

Nevertheless, there is something genuinely puzzling about step 3 of the argument. In the phrase 'something than which nothing greater can be thought', the verb 'think' (or 'think of, if you want the preposition) is construed with a noun or pronoun. You think (of) things, objects. But now, in step 3, 'think' is construed with a noun or pronoun plus an infinitive phrase: "z can be is thought to exist in reality." Here we are no longer thinking (of) things but rather states of affairs or whatever you want to call them in your ontological terminology. (In Latin, the construction here is a regular way of forming indirect discourse.) Hence when you compare these locutions, it isn't clear just what kind of mental operation "thinking" is supposed to be. Is it the forming of concepts, the making of a judgment, the entertaining of a hypothesis, or what? It's not clear. I tentatively suggest, however, that all Anselm means is something like this:

Suppose z doesn't exist in reality. Nevertheless, the following counterfactual conditional is true: If z did exist, it would be greater than it is (under our assumption that it doesn't exist).

That's very rough, to be sure. This formulation has the advantage of getting rid of the murky terminology of "thinking," but at the price of appealing to the equally mysterious vocabulary of "counterfactuals." In David Lewis's "Anselm and Actuality" and in my own "Anselm and Ambiguity," there is a more technical way of construing this, one that tries to cash out the notoriously difficult notion of counterfactuality. I refer you to those places if you wish.

What's wrong with the argument?

What about this argument? Does it succeed or fail? I've already indicated that I think it fails, but not for any of the reasons typically alleged. Why then?

Well, I think Anselm's argument trades on an ambiguity. (Hence the title of my paper, "Anselm and Ambiguity.") The ambiguity is in the comparative notion "greater than."

Throughout the argument, Anselm is talking in two different ways. He's talking about (1) the way things really are, but also about (2) the way they're thought of as being, they way they're thought to be. For example, something than which nothing greater can be thought may or may not (1) really exist, but, either way, it can (2) be thought of as existing.

Be warned! When I talk about something's being "thought of" as such and such, or something's being "thought to be" such and such, I don't necessarily mean it's believed to be such and such. All I'm talking about is "entertaining the thought" of its being such and such. In order to avoid confusion about this, I'll just adopt a slightly different terminology and distinguish between really being such and such and conceptually being such and such.

Four senses of 'greater than'

Now this is complicated, but just bear with me.

When Anselm says one thing is or isn't "greater than" another, we have to ask just what he means. To begin with, the phrase 'x is greater than y' might mean any one of four things:

- (a) x is really greater than y really is.
- (b) x is really greater than y is conceptually.
- (c) x is conceptually greater than y really is.
- (d) x is conceptually greater than y is conceptually.

Now a thing that doesn't really exist isn't really "great" at all, since there's nothing real about it. It may still, to be sure, be conceptually great to some degree, perhaps to a high degree, but that's quite a different issue. (Think of Utopia, for instance!)

The point of these observations is that one thing can be greater than another in one of these four senses and yet not be greater than the other in some or all of the remaining senses. For example, an imaginary hundred dollar bill is 100 times greater than an imaginary one dollar bill in sense (d) and infinitely greater in sense (c) (since the imaginary one dollar bill gets zero real greatness), but it's not greater in sense (a) or (b) (since the imaginary hundred dollar bill also gets zero real greatness).

How does this apply to the ontological argument? Well, suppose God doesn't really exist but I do. Then it turns out that I'm greater than God in senses (a) and (c), but not in senses (b) or (d). I really exist, so that no matter how meager my greatness really is and no matter how meager it is conceptually (provided I have at least a tiny measure of greatness both really and conceptually), still it's more than God really has. For by hypothesis God doesn't really exist and so doesn't really have any greatness at all.

(Of course, this remark would have to be adjusted if some things—say, me—have conceptually no greatness at all, or if some real things—say, me—really have no greatness at all. But the importance of the overall distinction among the four senses of "greater than" will not be affected.)

On the other hand—still assuming for the sake of illustration that God doesn't exist—he's nevertheless greater than I am in senses (c) and (d). God conceptually has an enormous amount of greatness—far more than I have either really or conceptually. As for sense (b), neither of us is greater than the other in that sense. My real greatness is far less, not greater, than the greatness God has conceptually. And by hypothesis, God doesn't exist, so that his real greatness (namely, none) is certainly no greater than the greatness I have conceptually.

For the logically inclined—the rest of you can just "tune out" for a moment: Note that what I just said means that if God doesn't exist but I do, then, in sense (c), each of us is greater than the other—I am both greater and less than God in sense (c)! I leave it to you to work out why this isn't a problem. Note that while all four senses of 'greater than' are transitive, nevertheless—provided that everything conceptually has, and every real thing really has, at least some greatness—sense (c) is neither irreflexive nor asymmetrical. For with the stated proviso, if x doesn't exist it will be greater than itself in sense (c).

OK, non-logicians, tune back in now. Of course if God does exist, then he's greater than I am in all four senses.

Plainly, we have to keep these various senses of 'greater than' straight throughout the ontological argument, or else we run the risk of outright equivocation. Where exactly

does the notion of “greater than” come up in the argument? Well, it comes up in two contexts:

In the phrase ‘something than which nothing greater can be thought’—that is, in the expression we’ve abbreviated by ‘z’.

In step 3 of the argument, where Anselm claims that, assuming z doesn’t really exist, nevertheless it can be thought to exist, and that would be greater.

In each of these contexts, ‘greater than’ might be read in any one of the four senses we’ve distinguished.

The ambiguity in the argument

Now let’s pause and remind ourselves what it takes to convince ourselves that an argument is sound. (Not just to be sound, since an argument can be sound without our realizing it, but to be convincingly sound.) Well, first of all it has to be valid; that is, the conclusion must follow from the premises. And second, there must be good, non-question-begging, reasons for accepting the premises.

In my view, the ontological argument as outlined above, is plainly valid—provided we keep the same sense of ‘greater than’ throughout the argument. It doesn’t matter which sense we use, as long as it’s the same one throughout. If we do that, then the argument is just a plain *reductio*. There’s nothing even slightly dubious about *reductio* as an argument form (at least not on most logics). If, however, we don’t keep the same sense of ‘greater than’ throughout the argument, then although the argument will still look like a *reductio*, it won’t really be one because it’ll suffer from equivocation. So, as long as we avoid equivocation, there’s no problem about the validity of the ontological argument.

But let’s think some more about the contexts where ‘greater than’ occurs in the argument. And first let’s look at the phrase ‘something than which nothing greater can be thought’, which we’ve been abbreviating “z.” The idea, then, is that I can’t think of anything greater than z. Now recall that this formula is supposed to express our notion of God—or at least something the believer would recognize as unique to God. (Again, see my paper “What Is a Proof for the Existence of God?”)

In order to do that, it seems to me, the notion of “greater than” there has to be taken in either sense (b) or sense (d). Whether God exists or not, nothing (b) really or (d) conceptually has more greatness than God conceptually has. But in sense (a), ‘something than which nothing greater can be thought’ simply describes “something than which you can’t think of anything really greater,” whatever that turns out to be, whether God or something else. A proof for the existence of God needs to prove the existence of more than just that. If the traditional God doesn’t exist, but Queen Elizabeth just happens to turn out to be the greatest thing that does exist, we wouldn’t say God exists and is Queen Elizabeth!

Likewise, in sense (c) ‘that than which no greater can be thought’ will be a description of God only if he exists. For otherwise, if God doesn’t exist, I can think of all sorts of things greater (in sense (c)) than he is. So we’re not going to have any reason at all to think the phrase taken in sense (c) describes what we’re trying to prove the existence of—unless we already have reason to think God exists. But that’s exactly the kind of question begging we need to avoid.

Therefore, we need to use “greater than” in sense (b) or sense (d) if we’re going to have any reason to think what we’re talking about is recognizably God.

OK, now let’s consider the other context in which the notion of “greater than” occurs in the argument, namely in step 3. This step says: If we suppose z doesn’t exist in reality, nevertheless

z can be thought to exist in reality, and that would be greater.

Now why would we be inclined accept this claim? It’s a little difficult to know exactly how to represent it, how to evaluate it. In terms of a modern logic of counterfactuals? possible-world semantics (or thinkable-world semantics?) [See Lewis “Anselm and Actuality,” and my own “Anselm and Amiguity.”] But no matter how we understand the claim, it seems we have no reason to accept it in senses (b) or (d), which are the only senses, we’ve seen, in which our formula “that than which no greater can be thought” hits the target. As I observed just a moment ago, “Whether God exists or not, nothing (b) really or (d) conceptually has more greatness than God conceptually has.” So there’s no reason to accept step 3 read in sense (b) or (d), and in fact every reason to reject it.

Here’s the situation then. There’s reason to accept the crucial step 3 at best only if we take the notion of “greater than” in either sense (a) or sense (c). Again, as we saw just a moment ago, there’s reason to recognize “something than which nothing greater can be thought” as God only if we take the notion of “greater than” in either sense (b) or (d) in that phrase. But unfortunately, we can’t have both without mixing the senses of “greater than” throughout the argument. And in that case, the argument is no longer valid; it’s a fallacy of equivocation. What persuasiveness the argument has comes taking advantage of this ambiguity. When we are looking for reasons to accept the crucial step (3) of the argument, we read “greater than” in one way—sense (a) or, more plausibly, sense (c). But then when we take the conclusion as establishing the existence of something that can be called God, we read “greater than” in a different sense, sense (b) or (d). And because we don’t realize what we’ve done, we perhaps suffer the illusion that the argument is valid when we equivocate like this—and it isn’t.

There are lots of questions and lots of things to explore here, but I’ll leave that to you. Let’s move on.

The argument in *Proslogion* 3

[DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT ON PROSLOGION 3.]

We turn now to *Proslogion* 3, where Anselm goes on to make a much stronger claim. In Chap. 2, as we've just seen, Anselm gives us his argument that z—"something than which nothing greater can be thought"—really exists. Now, in Chap. 3, he says that it not only exists, it can't even be thought not to exist!

The argument for this extraordinary claim goes roughly like this:

1. What *cannot* be thought not to exist is greater than what *can* be thought not to exist. (For now, don't ask why.)
2. I can think of something that can't be thought not to exist. For convenience, let's call it a. (Again, don't worry for now about whether this is really true. We'll return to this.)
3. Suppose (as hypothesis for a *reductio*) z—the same z as in Anselm's Chap. 2—can be thought not to exist.
4. Therefore, a is greater than z. (From steps 2–3.)
5. But step 4 is a contradiction, since z is something than which nothing greater can be thought.
6. Therefore, by *reductio*, z cannot be thought not to exist.

Note what this argument actually claims—and what it doesn't claim! It's about what can and cannot be thought. It's not about what is and what isn't possible. For some reason, a lot of the secondary literature has taken the argument in Chap. 3 as a modal argument—as though when Anselm is talking about what can be thought, he's talking about what can be. So, when Anselm concludes at the end of Chap. 3 that z cannot be thought not to exist, these people read the argument as saying that it cannot be that z doesn't exist—in short, that God is a necessary being. (See Normal Malcolm, "Anselm's Ontological Arguments" [note the plural], and Robert Merrihew Adams, "The Logical Structure of Anselm's Arguments.")

But that's not what the argument says, on the face of it. (Just look at the text.) You can read it as a modal argument if you want to, but that's reading an interpretation into the text. And I don't see any reason to do that.

In any case, let's look at the argument as it stands. What can we say about it?

Well, I have no special quarrel with the premise in step 1. There's room for discussion about the standards of greatness, but I don't think that matters here, for reasons we've already discussed in connection with the argument in Chap. 2. In any case, I'm willing to grant step 1 for the sake of argument. I'm even willing to grant that the sense of 'greater than' used in step 1 is the same sense used in the phrase 'something than which nothing

greater can be thought'. I'm willing to grant all this, even without looking at it closely, because I think there's another problem with the argument. In other words, I think the main problem this time is not with equivocating over the notion of "greater than."

I think the problem comes in step 2. Why should we accept step 2? I can't come up with any reason why we should. In fact, it seems to me that no matter what we're talking about, I can always entertain the thought of its being or not being any way I please. (At least I can do this provided "thinkable" isn't being read as "possible," or even as implying that it's possible.) I can do this even if I know better; I can do it even if it's impossible for things to turn out the way I'm thinking of them. In fact, we do that all the time whenever we argue by *reductio*. Of course, it's true I can entertain the thought of something-that-cannot-be-thought-not-to-exist. That is, I can think of something as if it were not able to be thought not to exist. But that's not what we need for the argument to work. In order to get step 2 in a sense that will make the argument go, we need to be able to think of something that really can't be thought not to exist, not just something that's thought of as unable to be thought not to exist.

That is (see the handout), I need to read step 2 not in the sense

(2a) I can think of: something-(call-it-a)-that-can't-be-thought-not-to-exist.

but as

(2b) I can think of something (call it a), such that a can't be thought not to exist.

So I think the argument rests on an ambiguity in step 2—an ambiguity quite different from the one I think is involved in the "ontological argument" in the preceding chapter.

But perhaps you don't agree with me. Perhaps you think step 2 is plausible, and that Anselm has a good argument here. In that case, you—and Anselm—have a really big problem.

A major problem

What about the Fool? I thought the Fool had said in his heart, "There is no God." But if Anselm's argument in Chap. 3 is correct, he can't do that. What about this?

This is the problem addressed in Anselm's Chap. 4 (p. 83). His reply in effect claims that the Fool says in his heart "God doesn't exist." He doesn't say "Something than which nothing greater can be thought doesn't exist." He can't say that, as the argument in Anselm's Chap. 3 purports to show. The reason he can get by with saying "God doesn't exist" is that he simply doesn't really know what the word 'God' means. (Perhaps that's why he's a Fool.) I suspect this is one reason Anselm studiously avoids the word 'God' in his actual statement of the argument in Chaps. 2–3.)

Either the Fool attaches no meaning at all to the word, so that he's just mouthing words without attaching any meanings to them (or "mouthing" them silently, "in his heart"—

this is the second kind of “utterance” = *vox* distinguished back in *Monologion* 10, p. 18), or else he gives some wrong meaning to the word ‘God’, a meaning that entirely misses the point of what we’re really arguing about. He thinks that when he denies the existence of God, he’s denying the existence of an old man with a white beard who lives on clouds, or something like that.

But it should be obvious that Anselm’s reply in his Chap. 4 just won’t work. Look back to the argument in *Proslogion* 2, the original “ontological argument.” In step 2 there, we’re asked to suppose for *reductio* that z—which is here serving as a mere typographical abbreviation for ‘something than which nothing greater can be thought’, which is the phrase Anselm actually uses—doesn’t exist in reality. If the argument in *Proslogion* 3 were correct, we couldn’t do that! In short, if *Proslogion* 3 is right, the argument in *Proslogion* 2 can’t even be formulated!

Let me approach the point from a different angle. The *Fool* may not know what the word ‘God’ means, but we do. Anselm has told us! So if Anselm’s right, no one should be able to say in his heart ‘Something than which nothing greater can be thought doesn’t exist’. In short, everyone who reads Anselm must automatically agree with his ontological argument. (Including, notably, Gaunilo!)

Well, do you agree? Or do you harbor even the slightest doubt about whether all this works? For that matter, if not you then does anyone else harbor such a doubt? Yes of course. The history of philosophy is full of people who have not only doubted but rejected the argument outright. But in that case we’ve empirically refuted Anselm! On his own grounds, no one should can do that, so the fact that people can and do shows that something’s wrong.

Note that what this shows is that something’s wrong with the argument in *Proslogion* 3, not with the argument in *Proslogion* 2. But I think there’s also something wrong with the Chap. 2 argument, as we’ve already discussed.

Gaunilo’s “Lost Island” objection

Now let’s look quickly at one of Gaunilo’s objections in his *On Behalf of the Fool*. There’s a lot of terminological funny-business going on in this little work. having to do with “saying in one’s heart” and the difference between “understanding” and “comprehending.” And I can’t say I understand all of it. In fact, I’m not sure there is a coherent terminology running through Gaunilo’s text. Some people think there is one, and some even think they know what it is. But they haven’t told me in a form I can fathom.

Nevertheless, one passage in Gaunilo’s *On Behalf of the Fool* is famous. It’s in § 6. This is the famous *Lost Island* argument. Here’s what it says (p. 102):

For example, there are those who say that somewhere in the ocean is an island, which, because of the difficulty—or rather, impossibility—of finding what does not exist, some call ‘the Lost Island’. This island (so the story goes) is more

plentifully endowed than even the isles of the Blessed with an indescribable abundance of all sorts of riches and delights. And because it has neither owner nor inhabitant, it is everywhere superior in its abundant riches to all the other lands that human beings inhabit.

Suppose someone tells me all this. The story is easily told and involves no difficulty, and so I understand it. But if this person went on to draw a conclusion and say, ‘You cannot any longer doubt that this island, more excellent than all others on earth [I’ll come back to this in a moment], truly exists somewhere in reality. For you do not doubt that this island exists in your understanding, and since it is more excellent to exist not merely in the understanding, but also in reality, this island must also exist in reality. For if it did not, any land that exists in reality would be greater than it. And so this more excellent thing that you have understood would not in fact be more excellent.’—If, I say, he should try to convince me by this argument that I should no longer doubt whether the island truly exists, either I would think he was joking, or I would not know whom I ought to think more foolish: myself, if I grant him his conclusion, or him, if he thinks he has established the existence of that island with any degree of certainty, without first showing that its excellence exists in my understanding as a thing that truly and undoubtedly exists and not in any way like something false of uncertain.

I want to call your attention to Gaunilo’s way of putting this. “This island,” he says, “more excellent than all others on earth ...” There’s an important disanalogy between that and Anselm’s argument. Anselm’s argument, I said, was strictly negative. His formulation was “something than which nothing greater can be thought.” He studiously avoids saying this “something” is greater than other things; he says only—negatively—that nothing is greater than it. Gaunilo fails to observe this nicety. He talks about his island as being positively “more excellent” than others.

So there’s a lack of parallel here. Still, it’s easy enough to touch up Gaunilo’s actual argument, and put it in terms of “this island, than which no other more excellent can be thought ...” In other words, I think this lack of parallel with Anselm’s strictly negative formulation is easily fixed. So let’s just tacitly fix it, then, and see what we can say about the “Lost Island” objection.

If Gaunilo (so fixed) is right, Anselm’s argument in *Proslogion* 2 must fail. Why? Because it proves too much. For, Gaunilo says, exactly the same form of argument could be used to prove the existence of the Lost Island.

It’s curious to look at Anselm’s reply to the Lost Island argument. It occurs in Chap. 3 of his response to Gaunilo (*Basic Writings*, pp. 107–08):

I say confidently that if anyone can find for me something existing either in reality or only in thought to which he can apply this inference in my argument, besides that than which a greater cannot be thought, I will give him that Lost Island, never to be lost again.

That is, Anselm's reply consists of remarking that the two arguments are not parallel. And that's all he says about it! But, as I've just argued, you can make them fully parallel!

Some people have tried to make it out that there really is a difference here, that "something than which nothing greater can be thought," for example, is a consistent notion, whereas "some island than which nothing greater can be thought" isn't, because I can always think of something greater than any island. But first of all, that misformulates the parallel. Anselm's original argument runs in terms of "something than which nothing greater can be thought"—that is, an x than which no greater y can be thought, where 'x' and 'y' range over whatever I can think of. Gaunilo's objection proceeds by narrowing down the range of discourse to whatever islands I can think of. So the proper way to think of it is "some island than which no greater island can be conceived," not "some island than no greater anything can be conceived." I think a lot of the secondary literature goes wrong on this point. (See § II of my paper "Anselm and Ambiguity" for the details.)

But even so, perhaps you think "some island than which no greater island can be thought" is still not a consistent notion, because no matter how great an island I think of, I can always think of a greater island. (For example, John Hick, in the second edition of his *Philosophy of Religion*, makes this claim.) I'm not sure how you would argue for that, but it doesn't matter because it's irrelevant anyway. Anselm's argument does not rest on the assumption that the notion of God is consistent, as we've seen. And so, therefore, neither does Gaunilo's (suitably fixed) parallel for the Lost Island assume the consistency of the Lost Island. Of course if Anselm's argument works and really does prove the existence of God, then of course it follows that the notion of God is consistent, insofar as the possible follows from the actual. But so what? The objection surely can't be saying that we have to regard as "implicit premises" of an argument whatever follows from its conclusion; that would mean every argument begs the question. I'm afraid what the objection really shows is that some of Anselm's critics don't really know how arguments work!

Besides, it wouldn't matter at all to either argument if you did add the explicit premise that the notion of "something than which nothing greater can be thought" ("some island than which no greater island can be thought") is consistent. That premise is nowhere implicitly appealed to anywhere in the argument. If you think it is, then tell me which step makes that appeal! There isn't one. (In fact, I think this is a crucial difference between Anselm's version of the ontological argument and Descartes's.)

No, Gaunilo's Lost Island argument can be constructed an exact parallel to Anselm's, despite Anselm's denial. And it shows that there's something wrong with Anselm's argument. It doesn't, however, show what's wrong. I've tried to that earlier in our discussion.

Remarks on Anselm's Reply to Gaunilo

We've already seen Anselm's reply to Gaunilo's "Lost Island" objection, and how I don't think that reply works. Here I want to record my views on some of Anselm's other arguments in his reply to Gaunilo. As before, let's agree to abbreviate the long phrase

‘something than which nothing greater can be thought’ by ‘z’. And let’s continue to use the notions of being “really” and “conceptually” such and such, I discussed in talking about *Proslogion*, Chap. 2.

a) First passage

First, in Chap. 1 of Anselm’s reply to Gaunilo (*Basic Writings*, p. 105—in the last full paragraph on the page), we get the following argument:

But I say with certainty that if it [= something than which nothing greater can be thought] can be so much as thought to exist, it must necessarily exist. For that than which a greater cannot be thought cannot be thought of as beginning to exist. By contrast, whatever can be thought to exist, but does not in fact exist, can be thought of as beginning to exist. Therefore, it is not the case that that than which a greater cannot be thought can be thought to exist, but does not in fact exist. If, therefore, it can be thought to exist, it does necessarily exist.

Note that in this argument, unlike what we saw in *Prosl.* Chap. 3, Anselm does explicitly twice say “necessarily.” He’s not only talking here about what can and cannot be thought, but also about genuinely modal notions. Nevertheless, I think the two occurrences of ‘necessarily’ here refer to necessary inferences, not to a necessary conclusion of an inference. That is, I don’t see any argument here that our “something than which nothing greater can be thought” is a necessary being.

What this argument tries to show that if z can exist even conceptually, then it exists really.

Proof:

1. z cannot conceptually begin to exist.
2. For all x, if x can exist conceptually and yet does not exist really, then x can conceptually begin to exist.
3. Therefore, if z can exist conceptually, then it exists really.

The argument is plainly valid, and step 2 seems to me to be true on the general grounds that I can entertain the thought of anything as doing anything whatever, whether things can possibly be the way I’m thinking of them or not. But, unfortunately, the same general grounds that verify step 2 refute step 1. I know of no other plausible grounds to grant step 2.

b) Second passage

In the same chapter, immediately following the previous passage (*Basic Writings*, pp. 105–06):

Furthermore, if it can be thought at all, it necessarily [same remark as before on this word] exists. For no one who denies or doubts that something than which a greater cannot be thought exists, denies or doubts that if it did exist, it would be unable to fail to exist either in reality or in the understanding, since otherwise it would not be that than which a greater cannot be thought. But whatever can be thought, but does not in fact exist, could (if it did exist) fail to exist either in reality or in the understanding. So if that than which a greater cannot be thought can be thought at all, it cannot fail to exist.

Here we have an attempt to prove that if z can even be thought, then it must exist.

Robert M. Adams, in his paper “The Logical Structures of Anselm’s Arguments,” interprets this argument as amounting to the modal argument for the existence of God I discussed in my handout on Descartes—even to the point of appealing to Brouwer’s Axiom. I don’t think that’s what’s going on, since—as we discussed in connection with *Proslogion*, Chap. 3, there’s no good reason to think that by “thinkable” Anselm means “possible”—that is, that by “can be thought” he just means “can be.”

But whether Adams is right or not to interpret “thinkable” as “possible,” I don’t think he’s right to find the Cartesian modal argument in this passage. The Cartesian modal argument is valid (I don’t say it’s sound—see the Descartes handout), whereas this one—as best I can read it—is fallacious.

In skeletal form, the argument goes like this:

Suppose z doesn’t really exist. Then nevertheless, if it did exist, its non-existence would be both possible and impossible.

In fact the reasoning in the text is not all that clear here. Presumably the idea is that, on the one hand, being unable not to exist (i.e., being necessary) is “greater” than not being unable not to exist. So if there is any such thing as “something than which nothing greater can be thought,” it is unable not to exist. Hence, even if we assume it doesn’t really exist, we can agree that if it did, it would be unable not to exist.

That’s how we get the one side of the conclusion. On the other hand, if we assume z doesn’t exist, then we’re assuming it’s at least possible that it not exist. Now what’s possible and what’s not possible shouldn’t depend on what does or doesn’t happen to exist. (This is the move I say isn’t entirely clear in the text. Some later authors, in the 14th century, explicitly argued this way.) Therefore, if we suppose z doesn’t exist, then even if it did exist, it would still be possible for it not to exist.

Putting these two lines of reasoning together, the text concludes that, if we suppose z doesn’t exist, nevertheless if it did exist, its non-existence would be both possible and impossible. But that’s a contradiction, and therefore by *reductio* z does exist after all.

But if that is the argument, it’s just a fallacy. Anselm seems to think that if we’re given a proposition of the form ‘If it’s not the case that *p*, then if it were the case that *p*, a

contradiction would follow', we can infer that it is the case that p after all. But in fact all we can infer is that either it is the case that p or else it's impossible that p .

Consider an exactly parallel case: If a round square doesn't exist (which of course it doesn't), then nevertheless if it did exist, there would be a contradiction. But it doesn't follow that a round square exists!

c) Third passage

The same kind of fallacy is committed in the third passage I want to focus on (*Basic Writings*, p. 106):

But let us assume instead that it does not exist, although it can be thought. Now something that can be thought but does not exist, would not, if it existed, be that than which a greater cannot be thought. And so, if it existed, that than which a greater cannot be thought would not be that than which a greater cannot be thought, which is absurd. Therefore, if that than which a greater cannot be thought can be thought at all, it is false that it does not exist—and much more so if it can be understood and can exist in the understanding.

(I'm not sure what that last part is supposed to add. Here's one those places where Anselm and Gaunilo get into it about the distinction between thinking and understanding. As I indicated earlier in our discussion of Gaunilo, I'm not sure there's really a coherent terminology in this exchange.)

d) Fourth passage

Again immediately following the last quoted passage, Anselm gives an extended argument (*Basic Writings*, p. 106):

I shall say something more. If something does not exist everywhere and always, even if perhaps it does exist somewhere and sometimes, it can undoubtedly be thought not to exist anywhere or at any time, just as it does not exist in this particular place or at this particular time. For something that did not exist yesterday but does exist today can be conceived of as never existing in just the same way that it is understood as not existing yesterday. And something that does not exist here but does exist elsewhere can be thought not to exist anywhere in just the same way that it does not exist here. Similarly, when some parts of a thing do not exist in the same place or at the same time as other parts of that thing, all its parts—and therefore the thing as a whole—can be thought not to exist anywhere or at any time. Even if we say that time always exists and that the universe is everywhere, [recall our discussion of this way of speaking in connection with *Monologion*, Chap. 21] nevertheless, the whole of time does not always exist, and the whole of the universe is not always everywhere. And just as each individual part of time does not exist when

the others do, so each can be thought never to exist. And just as each individual part of the universe does not exist where the others do, so each can be thought to exist nowhere. Moreover, whatever is composed of parts can, at least in thought, be divided and fail to exist. Therefore, whatever does not exist as a whole in all places and at all times, even if it does exist, can be thought not to exist. But that than which a greater cannot be thought, if it exists, cannot be thought not to exist. For otherwise, even if it exists, it is not that which a greater cannot be thought—which is absurd. Therefore, there is no time and no place in which it does not exist as a whole; it exists as a whole always and everywhere.

This is a difficult passage, and I'm not sure I entirely follow the argument. First of all, it doesn't seem to be an argument for the existence of God, but rather to presuppose the argument in *Prosl.* Chap. 3. [Look at the antepenultimate sentence: "But that than which a greater cannot be thought, if it exists, *cannot be thought not to exist*."]

But, whatever it's trying to argue, it seems to me it doesn't show that z exists at all, much less that it exists always and everywhere. At best, all it could show is that if z exists, it exists always and everywhere. The action, it seems to me, comes in the last part: If it exists, it cannot be thought not to exist; but if it doesn't exist always and everywhere, it can be thought not to exist. Hence, if it exists, it must exist always and everywhere. (The general form is: $p \rightarrow \sim q, \sim r \rightarrow q, \therefore p \rightarrow r$.) That's a perfectly good argument, but it doesn't show anything very much.

e) Fifth passage

In Chapter 5 of Anselm's reply to Gaunilo, we get the following argument (*Basic Writings*, p. 109):

For if someone says that that than which a greater cannot be thought is not something in reality, or is capable of not existing, or can be thought not to exist [Note: here possibility \neq thinkability], he is easily refuted. For whatever does not exist is capable of not existing, and whatever is capable of not existing can be thought not to exist. Now **(a)** whatever can be thought not to exist, if it does exist, is not that than which a greater cannot be thought. And **(b)** if it does not exist, it would not be that than which a greater cannot be thought even if it were to exist. But it makes no sense to say that that than which a greater cannot be thought, **(a)** if it exists, is not that than which a greater cannot be thought, and that **(b)** if it [does not exist but] were to exist, it would not be that than which a greater cannot be thought. It is therefore evident that it exists, that it is not capable of not existing, and that it cannot be thought not to exist. For otherwise, **(a)** if it exists, it is not the thing spoken of; and **(b)** if it [does not exist but] were to exist, it would not be the thing spoken of.

This is again a difficult argument. (Notice that there some textual problems, which Williams has tried to fix in his translation.)

But as I read it, once again we have a *reductio* argument. This time it goes more or less as follows:

1. Suppose for *reductio* that z doesn't really exist.
2. Therefore, it's possible for z not to exist. (Since if it's actually so, it's capable of being so.)
3. Therefore, it's thinkable for z not to exist. (Even if some thinkable things are impossible, nothing possible is unthinkable—at least that's what this argument says.)
4. If something x can be thought not to exist [and from Step 3 we know z is like that], then
 - (a) if it nevertheless exists anyway, it isn't z. (Presumably the idea here is that it's "greater" not to be able to be thought not to exist—as in *Prosl.*, Chap. 3.) Again,
 - (b) if it doesn't exist, it wouldn't be z even if it did exist. (For the same reason.)
5. Therefore, either z isn't z, or else z wouldn't be z if it existed. (By instantiating step 4 to z and using step 3.)
6. But this is contradictory, so that step 1 must be rejected by *reductio*.
7. Hence, z really does exist.

But despite what Anselm says, step 5 isn't contradictory. It just means that it's impossible for z to exist. All step 5 amounts to is saying that either we have a certain contradiction (z \neq z)—which of course we don't—or else we would have that contradiction if z existed. And that means z can't exist. The *reductio* therefore fails, and all we get from steps 1–5 is the conclusion that if we suppose z doesn't exist, we can conclude it's impossible, which is interesting enough, but not what Anselm was trying to show.

Anselm on Truth

We're now reaching the Anselm material I'm not as familiar with as the *Monologion* and *Proslogion* material. So I'll be eager to hear your own views on it.

On Truth is the first of a cluster of three "dialogues" on more or less philosophical topics. As a kind of "preface" to the trilogy, Anselm tells us (p. 115) that over a period of several years, he wrote a series of four "dialogues." One of them was the *De grammatico* (= *On the Grammarian* or better *On the Literate*—to preserve a crucial ambiguity in the Latin),

which we'll talk about later. According to the chronology in Southern's biography, this was the earliest thing we have from Anselm (1060–63), earlier even than the miscellaneous collection of *Prayers* and *Meditations* that led up to the *Monologion*.

The other three “dialogues,” he says, were the ones we know as *On Truth*, *On Freedom of Choice*, and *On the Fall of the Devil*. They were written some twenty years later, between 1080 and 1086, according to Southern's best estimate (which means according to the best estimate). Together, they are sometimes collectively known as the *Philosophical Dialogues* (an expression that typically doesn't include the *De grammatico*, even though it's just as philosophical—and in fact, along with the so called *Lambeth Fragments*, which are on various “modal” notions, is the only purely philosophical thing Anselm ever wrote).

All four dialogues are pretty straightforward, as dialogues go. The two parties are identified simply as the “Teacher” and the “Student,” and although the “Student” gets a few good lines, there's no doubt who's in charge throughout. The Teacher is plainly speaking on Anselm's behalf.

Anselm doesn't exactly say in what order he wrote the last three of these dialogues, but he does say they are meant to be read in the order just given: *On Truth*, *On Free Choice*, and then *On the Fall of the Devil*. So we'll follow his wish. Let's begin therefore with *On Truth*.

There are several good secondary sources on this little dialogue. First of all, there's Jasper Hopkins's *A Companion to the Study of St. Anselm* (cited on the handout of “Bibliography”), Chap. 5, which discusses the three *Philosophical Dialogues* as a unit.

Another secondary source is the very ample “editor's introduction” to Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson's translation of the three dialogues, from the 1960s. It's about 75 pages long, and includes a bibliography. (Again, it treats the three dialogues as a unit.)

But more recent—and I think better overall—are two articles devoted exclusively to Anselm's theory of truth. One is Marilyn Adams's “Anselm's Theory of Truth” (1990), and the other is Sandra Visser and Thomas Williams's “Anselm on Truth,” Chap. 9 of our *Companion* volume.

I think the Visser/Williams paper is breathtakingly good. (I'm not sure I agree with all of it, but it's very provocative and suggestive, and makes a lot of sense.) The Adams paper disagrees with Visser/Williams in certain respects, but has the added virtue that it links what is said in *On Truth* with what we've already heard about truth in the *Monologion*. Visser/Williams don't talk about the *Monologion* in their article. (We'll say more about this in a moment.)

The Correspondence Theory of Truth

In modern philosophical discourse, when we speak about theories of truth, we generally think of logic, the philosophy of language, or formal semantics. And if that's what you're used to, Anselm's dialogue must come as something of a shock to you.

Those theories are for the most part theories of truth CONDITIONS—of the necessary and sufficient conditions under which we can say a statement or proposition is true.

That's not Anselm's main agenda in this dialogue, although he certainly does talk about that too. Anselm's is a much more metaphysical investigation. He's not so much interested in formulating precisely when a statement or proposition is true as he is in what TRUTH is. If we just say that TRUTH is the satisfying of the conditions for being true, we haven't said very much—and Anselm wants to go deeper than that. In the end, he's talking about much more than truth conditions.

At bottom, Anselm's theory of truth is irreducibly teleological in nature. And this is surely what makes it look so strange at first.

But be reassured. Anselm in no sense rejects the standard, traditional account of truth-CONDITIONS, which we sometimes refer to as a "correspondence"-theory.

The "correspondence-theory" of truth is perhaps formulated first and certainly most famously in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Γ.7, where he quite reasonably says:

To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true.

Note that what Aristotle is strictly saying here is about the true and the false, not truth and falsity. And in any case, Anselm didn't know the *Metaphysics* because it wasn't translated yet.

But Boethius knew it (recall, he knew Greek) and paraphrases this passage very closely in his own *Commentary on the Categories*, which Anselm did have access to.

Anselm is surely appealing to this Aristotelian/Boethian source near the beginning of the *On Truth*, when he asks (Chap. 2, p. 119):

T. When is a statement true? [Note: Here he is asking about the conditions under which a statement is true, not about what truth is.]

S. When what it states, either by affirming or denying, is the case. For I say that it states something even when it denies that what-is-not is, since that is the way in which it states what is the case.

In short, a statement is true when it, so to speak, "corresponds to reality." So Anselm (actually, it's "the Student" formulates a "correspondence" theory of when a statement is true.

Anselm never takes this back, and never says anything to suggest he doesn't fully endorse it. So you can be assured that he's still more or less in the familiar ballpark.

On the other hand, this isn't what he's interested in. For he goes on immediately after this quotation to ask what the truth of a true statement is—and we're off and running.

Background

Now let's back up for a moment and ask why the Student and the Teacher are having this little conversation in the first place. In Chap. 1 (p. 119), the Student reminds Anselm (= the Master) of what he had said back in the *Monologion*, Chap. 18.

There, you'll recall, Anselm had argued in effect that there never was a time in the past when it wasn't true to say that I would be uttering these words today at such and such a time. Likewise, there never will be a time in the future when it won't be true to say that I was uttering these words today. (He didn't put it in terms of *me*, of course.) So, since there is always something true, therefore there is always truth as well. But truth = the supreme being, he claims, so that the supreme being must always exist.

(Recall, I remarked at the time that Anselm doesn't really need the claim that God is identical with truth, since all he needs is the claim that truth exists through God. Nevertheless, he does make the identification.)

Well now, here in Chap. 1 of *On Truth*, the Student wants to know (p. 119—right at the beginning):

Since we believe that God is truth and we say that truth is in many other things, I would like to know whether, whenever truth is said to be, we must acknowledge that God is that truth.

In short, when we're talking about the truth of a proposition, say, are we talking about God?

Or should we be thinking of a more Platonic kind of view, according to which God is something like the Platonic Form of Truth, and when we speak of the "truth" of this or that proposition, we're really talking about multiple instantiations or imitations of or participations in this Platonic Form? In that case, although God is always lurking not far in the background, we're not always talking about God when we're talking about truth; sometimes we mean those lesser instantiations.

So this is the kind of thing the Student wants an accounting of. It's a good question.

The Truth of Statements

We start with the easiest and most familiar cases of talking about truth: the truth of statements. The word translated as 'statement' in our translation is usually—but not always—Latin *enuntiatio*, which literally means "enunciation." 'Statement' is probably a good enough translation. The point is it doesn't mean "proposition" in the sense in which that word is used in recent "analytic" philosophy. Rather, a statement is a piece of language, not something in the world "expressed" by that piece of language. Statements, in other words, are in English or French or Latin.

OK, now we've already seen (Chap. 2, p. 119) that a statement is true iff it states "what is the case." Those are its "truth-conditions."

This suggests, then, an obvious candidate for the truth of a true statement—namely, what it states: what is the case, the facts, the situation, reality (or at least the relevant portion of reality).

But the Student rejects this candidate. He says (p. 120):

... nothing is true except by participating in truth, and so the truth of what is true is in the true thing itself, whereas the thing stated is not in the true statement.

That is, the fact or state of affairs asserted by a true statement is not something actually in the statement itself—so that the true statement doesn't "participate" in that fact.

Notice: This argument is interesting, because it indicates that the Student is starting off from exactly the kind of "Platonic" point of view I mentioned a moment ago. In fact, as it turns out by the end of the dialogue, Anselm (= the Master) doesn't want to talk this way. He doesn't think it's really correct to speak of the "truth of the true" at all, or to think in terms of multiple instantiations of truth. (See Chap. 13, especially p. 144—the end of the whole dialogue, where he describes that way of talking as said "improperly.")

Nevertheless, this is how the discussion gets going, and Anselm would certainly agree with the Student's conclusion here that "what is the case," the facts or states of affairs stated by a true statement, are not its truth.

The Student now (back in Chap. 2) makes the obvious move. No, he says, it's not what the statement states that is its truth; rather, it must be something "in the statement itself" (p. 120).

The Teacher then suggests:

T. Then consider whether the statement (*oratio*) itself, or its signification (*significatio*) or any of those things that are in the definition of 'statement' (*enuntiatio*), is what you are looking for..

Notice that we've got a new Latin word here (*oratio*), although Williams doesn't distinguish it from *enuntiatio*, and translates both as 'statement'. OK, now we need a little lesson in terminology and definition. We've already seen the term 'statement' = '*enuntiatio*', and I've told you what it means. 'Signification' is the obvious and correct translation of '*significatio*'.

But what about this new word *oratio*? Obviously, we get "oration" from it. But in medieval grammatical theory, the word is used in a very broad sense to mean any piece of language. It doesn't have to be a complete sentence the way an *enuntiatio* does; even a single word will suffice for an *oratio*. And it doesn't have to be spoken language; it could equally well be written language, for example (although that's not a complication that comes up here). I usually translate the word '*oratio*' as EXPRESSION.

OK, there's one other piece of vocabulary you need, and then I'll tell you why I'm belaboring all this. The word is Latin '*propositio*' = proposition, and my point is that in

medieval usage the word means the same as '*enuntiatio*'. That is, it means a piece of language—in particular, a sentence, a declarative sentence. It does not mean, any more than '*enuntiatio*' does, what is expressed by the piece of language. It's OK to translate it as "proposition", as long as we don't read that in the modern sense.

Now here's the point. Look back at the passage I just read, where the Teacher says (p. 120):

T. Then consider whether the statement (*oratio* = expression) itself, or its signification (*significatio*) or any of those things that are in the definition of 'statement' (*enuntiatio*), is what you are looking for..

What is the "definition" of an *enuntiatio*? What is he talking about? Well, I think I know, although I don't know how I could prove it.

Boethius had written a little work entitled *De differentiis topicis* ("On the Differences of the Topics"), which I'm not sure, but would have been a very likely work to have in the library at Bec, since it was a more or less standard work in the rhetorical tradition (and recall that Lanfranc taught rhetoric among other things at Bec). In that work, Boethius famously defines a propositio ("proposition"), which I've just told you is basically a synonym for '*enuntiatio*' in the Middle Ages, as:

A proposition is an expression (*oratio*) signifying the true or the false.
(*Propositio est oratio verum falsumve significans.*)

I suggest that this is the "definition of a statement" Anselm is referring to.

The question he is now asking, therefore, is whether truth can be identified with something that enters into that definition? Well, what does enter into that definition? We've already rejected "the true" or "the false"—that is, what is stated by the statement or proposition—as a candidate for truth. What's left? *Oratio*—i.e., an "expression"—and signifying.

So that's what's going on here. The Teacher's suggestion, then is that perhaps the truth of a statement can be identified with either the expression or statement itself or else its signifying.

Nevertheless, the Student rejects this hypothesis too. Why? Why can't truth be one of the things that enter into this definition? The Student answers (p. 120):

Because if that were so, the statement would always be true, since everything in the definition of 'statement' remains the same, both when what is stated is the case and when it isn't. For the statement (*oratio* again, i.e., "expression") is the same, its signification is the same, and so forth.

(I'm not sure what other things he's referring to by the phrase "and so forth," and this may count against my suggested identification of the definition they are talking about.)

In any case the idea is this: A statement can change its truth value (from true to false or conversely), simply by there being changes only in the world. That is, first the truth can be in the statement, and then the truth is no longer in it, or conversely. And yet it's the same sequence of words with the same signification throughout. That is, the features that enter into its definition remain invariant. Therefore, since the truth comes and goes in the statement while all the things that define the statement remain the same, truth cannot be any of the things that define the statement.

Fair enough. So what then is truth? Here is where we see the teleological aspect of Anselm's account coming out.

Here we go (p. 120):

T. For what purpose is an affirmation made? (I.e., an affirmative statement.)

That's the teleological question: what's its purpose?

S. For signifying that what-is is.

And presumably the corresponding "purpose" of a negative statement is to signify that what-is-not isn't, although that isn't explicitly said here. In short, statements in general are made for the purpose of corresponding to reality.

The translation here is a little awkward, but there's nothing awkward about the Latin. It's *Ad significandum esse quod est* = lit. "for signifying to be what is."

You might think this statement of purpose is already too quick. Sometimes we make statements for other purposes—for example, when we're trying to deceive someone, where the whole point seems to be not to correspond to reality. Or perhaps we're making a statement just to test the sound system in a performance hall. (After all, the purpose of the statement is not part of the definition we've seen.) But let's just wait.

To simplify matters, let's just leave negative statements out of account for now, and focus on the affirmative ones, the purpose of which, we just said, was to "signify that what-is is."

T. So it ought to do that [i.e., to signify that what-is is].

S. Certainly.

T. So when it signifies that what-is is, it signifies what it ought to.

S. Obviously.

The word here is '*debet*'. It means "ought" or "should", and it also means "owe"—we speak of a "debt."

Notice what's happened here. Anselm has just linked the notion of purpose or teleology with the notion of owing or "ought"—a normative notion. Things ought to do what they

were made for. (Remember the question “for what purpose is an affirmation made?”) Things ought to fulfill their purpose.

There’s no argument given for this linkage here, but it’s a crucial move for Anselm’s whole picture. We will see it throughout the *On Truth*, and in fact throughout the *Philosophical Dialogues* as a whole.

We now get an additional linkage (still on p. 120):

T. And when it signifies what it ought to it signifies correctly.

S. Yes.

T. Now when it signifies correctly, its signification is correct.

S. No doubt about it.

The point here is merely to link all the previous stuff up with the notion of being correct. The Latin here is simply ‘*rectus*’ (or one of its inflected variants), and just means “right.” So all we’re saying is that when a statement signifies what it ought to, it signifies “rightly,” and its signification is “right.”

We talk the same way when we agree with something by saying, “That’s right.”

So we’ve got two link-ups here: (i) the link between the teleological notion of what a statement (or, for that matter, anything) is made for and the normative notion of what it ought to be or to do; and (ii) the link between what a thing ought to be or to do and its being right.

As far as I can see, the second link is purely terminological, and doesn’t really add much in the way of theory, although it will be important for the way Anselm puts the theory, as we’ll see. In other words, the notion of being right is not really a third substantive notion in addition to the notions of a thing’s purpose (“what is it made for”) and what it ought to do.

OK, but still, let’s put the two links together. The purpose or teleology of a statement is to signify what is the case, and when it does that, it does what it ought to and its signification is correct.

But we also said that, when it does that, the statement is true. (Recall the Teacher’s originally asking—p. 119—when a statement is true.) That is (p. 121):

T. Furthermore, when it signifies that what-is is, its signification is true.

And so we get the conclusion (p. 121):

T. Then its being correct [= right] is the same thing as its being true; namely, its signifying that what-is is.

S. Indeed they are the same.

T. So its [the statement’s] truth is nothing other than its rectitude [= rightness].

So the upshot of all this is that for Anselm the truth of a statement is its rightness in a normative sense, cashed out in terms of a kind of correspondence-notion and linked with the thing's purpose or teleology.

As we'll see in a little while, there's another clause that has to be added here, but we'll deal with that later.

Now you might think this is an awful lot of labor for a result that isn't really very impressive in the end. But be patient. I've dwelt on this for so long because I want to be sure you see the progression here: the progression from (a) a thing's teleology or purpose to (b) what it ought to be or to do, and from there to (c) what is normatively right for it to be or to do, and from there finally to (d) what the truth is for it.

We will see this pattern repeated in a variety of contexts in the *On Truth*. Let's look at some of them.

Truth in Other Contexts

In Chap. 2, we talked about the truth of statements. We go on in Chap. 3 to talk about the truth of opinion—that is, in the mind. Notice the same progression (p. 123)—by this time the Student seems to have caught on, and now he gets to say:

S. According to the reasoning we found persuasive in the case of statements [NB: HE ACTUALLY SAYS 'PROPOSITIO' HERE, EVEN THOUGH THE PRECEDING CHAPTER WAS ABOUT AN 'ENUNTIATIO'. THIS IS PERHAPS ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE FOR MY SUGGESTION THAT THE "DEFINITION OF A STATEMENT (ENUNTIATIO)" ANSELM REFERRED TO BACK IN CHAP. 2 IS REALLY BOETHIUS'S FAMOUS DEFINITION OF A PROPOSITION.], nothing can be more correctly [= "rightly"] called the truth of a thought than its rectitude [= "rightness"]. For the power of thinking that something is or is not was given to us (a) in order that [= there's the teleological move] we might think that what-is is, and that what-is-not is not. Therefore, if someone thinks that what-is is, he is thinking (b) what he ought to think [there's the move from teleology to the normative "ought" again], and so his thought is (c) correct [= "right"]. If, then, a thought is true and correct for no other reason than that we are thinking that what-is is, or that what-is-not is not, (d) its truth is nothing other than rectitude.

So we have the same progression as in Chap. 2: from (a) teleology to (b) the normative ought, and from there to (c) what is normatively right, and finally from there to (d) truth.

In Chap. 4 (pp. 123–24), we get the same theme in connection with "truth" for the will. John's Gospel says that the devil did not "remain steadfast in the truth," and this can only be because of what he willed. So there must be a notion of "truth" that applies to the will as well. And you can anticipate how this goes: in the case of the will, (d) truth is simply

(c) rectitude (i.e., “rightness”), which is a matter of doing (b) what it ought, which is in turn cashed out in terms of (a) for what a will was given in the first place (its teleology).

In Chap. 5 (pp. 124–26), we get the same thing applied to “natural and non-natural” actions. (“Non-natural action” doesn’t mean “unnatural acts,” but voluntary action.) So we can speak, for example, of fire as “doing the truth” when it does what it ought (i.e., it heats things up) = what it was made for doing:

S. If the fire received the power to heat from the one from whom it has being, then when it heats, it is doing what it ought to. So I do not see what is inappropriate about saying that the fire does the truth and acts correctly when it does what it ought to. (p. 125.)

That’s an example of natural action. So too for voluntary actions when we do what we ought.

In Chap. 6 (pp. 126–27) we learn that there is truth in the senses—even in the case of sensory illusions. They are working as they were made to work, and any falsehood comes only in our judgment about what the senses report.

Finally, in Chap. 7 (pp. 128–29), we get the rather esoteric notion of the truth of the being of things. Things truly are when they are the way they ought to be, when they fulfill the purpose for which they were created—which they can’t help but doing insofar as God’s providential plan is not to be thwarted.

OK, now let’s pause before we get too carried away, and notice some complications that emerge back in Chap. 2, on the truth of statements or propositions. (What I’m trying to do now is to set up some points of comparison and contrast between Adams’s paper and the Visser/Williams chapter in the *Companion*. This is a bit of a grab-bag.)

First of all, the Student notes that there’s a potential objection to—or at least a surprising consequence—of our claim that the truth of a statement or proposition is its rightness—that is, its doing what it ought to do, which in turn is its fulfilling the purpose for which it was made.

Remember how the Student, back in Chap. 2, had rejected the earlier suggestion that the truth of a statement could be identified either with the statement itself (the actual words, the expression or *oratio*) or with its signification—because those remain invariant although the statement can change from true to false or vice versa. In fact, isn’t the statement—the actual piece of language, the expression—designed in such a way as to have precisely that invariant signification? So when it signifies that way, isn’t it doing exactly what it’s supposed to—that FOR WHICH IT WAS MADE? (Made by whom? We’ll see in a moment.) And if that’s so, does it then follow from our account of truth that the statement is true whenever it signifies the way it does—regardless of the facts? But in that case the statement would be both true (in that sense) and yet false (since it fails to say “what is the case”—and we said that Anselm never abandons that “correspondence” notion of truth).

Anselm's reply (p. 121) is that yes, we can say that if we wish. We don't usually do so, but we can. In fact, we can distinguish two ways in which a statement can do what it ought to do (and so be true)—because there are two things it ought to do.

(1) First of all, it ought signify the way it does.

(This is not to suggest, of course, that there's any danger it's not going to signify the way it does—as though the statement 'The cat is on the mat' were suddenly, in a fit of perversity, just to get it into its head that it's going to signify that the moon is made of green cheese. No, that's not going to happen. But still, when the statement signifies the way it does, it's doing what it was designed to do, it's fulfilling its purpose.)

(2) But a statement ought also to signify "as is the case." That's what statements are made for, as we said at the outset, and that's what we normally have in mind when we talk about the truth of a statement.

So there are really two kinds of truth for a statement, although we're usually only talking about the second kind.

There are still problems, though—AND NOW I'M "FREEWHEELING." Suppose that in fact the cat is not on the mat (it's gone out the door). Now the statement 'The cat is on the mat', we said, was designed (made) to signify exactly the way it does, that the cat is on the mat. On the other hand, we also said that all statements are designed or made to signify the way things are, to "correspond to the facts." Unfortunately, as long as our cat is somewhere else, the statement cannot fulfill both purposes.

Does this mean that in such a case the statement was made with inconsistent purposes? Or that the statement-maker intended the two purposes to be consistent and just slipped up? That he intended the statement to mean something other than what it does? Or that he intended the cat to get back on the mat? Or what? How do we sort this out?

Let's look more closely. We asked early on what the purpose of a statement is—"for what was a statement made?" And now let's ask: made by whom?

The obvious answer would seem to be: made by the speakers who are actually using the language—in short, that the relevant makers of statements here are you and me and other ordinary human beings.

But there's a problem if that's what we mean: The claim that all statements are made for the purpose of signifying the way things are unfortunately seems to be just not so for all too many human statement-makers (to wit: liars)!

So maybe—and again I'm freewheeling here—what we want to do here is to say that we're not talking about individual human beings so much as about the linguistic community at large. After all, statements get to have the meaning or signification they do, we may say, not because of individual acts of "meaning-legislation" on my part. No, it's more of a communal, cultural process. That's how language comes to signify the way it does. By the same token, perhaps we can say that while there are—alas!—far too many liars in the world, and for that matter lots of other individual reasons for making

statements, still overall the function of language at large is to communicate, and preeminently to communicate the way things are.

Perhaps. But my reason for bringing all this up is to set the background for some of the discussion in the Visser/Williams article in the *Companion* and for Marilyn Adams's paper, "Saint Anselm's Theory of Truth."

Visser and Williams make an interesting claim. They're quoting from *On Truth*, Chap. 2, the passage where the Teacher (= Anselm) is explaining the two kinds of purposes I just distinguished, although in the passage I'm about to read only the second purpose for statements (to "signify the way things are") is at stake. The passage is on p. 122 in *Basic Writings*, and is quoted in the Visser/Williams article on p. 207 of the *Companion*:

T. For example, when I say "It is day" in order to signify that what-is is, I am using the signification of this statement [*oratio*—we've talked about that word before—I like to translate it as "expression"] correctly, since this is the purpose for which it was made; consequently, in that case it is said to signify correctly. But when I use the same statement [*oratio*] to signify that what-is-not is, I am not using it correctly, since it was not made for that purpose; and so in that case its signification is said not to be correct.

So far, so good.

Now Visser and Williams argue: Look, the passage is talking about using the same oratio "It is day" on two different occasions—once during the daytime, when the statement is true, and once during the nighttime, when the statement is false.

This implies, they go on, that what Anselm means by an "*oratio*"—and hence, notice, by an *enuntiatio* or *propositio*, which is defined as a subcase of oratio—is not a token. It is not a particular occurrence of uttering or speaking; it's rather an utterance-type or speaking-type—something that can be repeated on distinct occasions. It is, in short, a kind of nature. (A kind of universal that can be shared.)

So—when we're talking about the purpose or that for which an *oratio* or *enuntiatio* is made, we're not talking about making tokens but about making types. It's not about whatever purpose I might have in uttering the expression "It is day" on a particular occasion—for example, my purpose of deceiving you about what time it is. Rather, it's about the purpose for making that expression-type.

But who makes expression-types? And so who is in a position to make them for a purpose? Certainly I don't, although I do produce particular tokens.

Perhaps here is where we might appeal to the linguistic community or something like that. Visser and Williams suggest (although they reject) a variation on this approach when they say (p. 208):

One can build the teleology into our God-given power to use language, rather than into the statement-types themselves. Such a move allows one

to recognize the conventionality of natural languages—to acknowledge, in other words, that it is human beings who make natural-language statement-types [*i.e.*, human beings as a group]—but insist that our ability to make and use such languages was given to us by God for the purpose of signifying that what-is-is. Thus, we use our power of speech correctly when we use conventional natural-language statement-types in order to signify that what-is is.

I'm not sure how far we can get with that. But nevertheless, they reject this plausible hypothesis on interesting grounds (p. 208–09):

Unfortunately, Anselm himself cannot take this approach, since it involves conceding that creatures do have a limited power to create natures and confer purposes on them.

So, who does make these statement-types? God—the only one who can! And since he makes them, they are made for the purposes he has in making them. In short, the teleology built into Anselm's theory of the truth of statements is a teleology provided by God.

Notice what this account requires: it requires God to create statement-types. And we're talking about natural-language statement-types. It's not just a theory that God creates propositions in the modern sense, entities expressed by statements in language. No, what we're talking about is God's getting down-and-dirty in the grimy details of English and French! Visser and Williams are right, I think, to hesitate a little to attribute that kind of view to Anselm (they speak on p. 208 of the “strangeness of this view”)—although they nevertheless do it.

But let's look more closely. Notice why Visser/Williams feel pushed into this interpretation:

- Anselm would deny that human beings have even a limited power to create natures. And that's certainly correct; only God can create anything—natures or otherwise. But we're not talking about creation here—that is, creation *ex nihilo*. We're talking about something less than that—merely a kind of productive causality (efficient causes). And Anselm does not deny that human beings can make things, and can make them for something (for a purpose) in that sense. So why would making statement-types be a case of creation, as they think?
- Nevertheless, statement-types are a kind of universal nature, they say, and it's probably still true that Anselm doesn't think human beings have the capacity to make NATURES—even if that doesn't amount to creation.

On the other hand, why do Visser/Williams think that statement-types are natures? Their reading seems automatically to read statement-types as natures, but why? Because they're repeatable? It's a little hard to know how to answer this, since it's hard to know how to read natures, types and tokens back into Anselm at all.

In this connection, it's interesting to contrast Adams's paper "Saint Anselm's Theory of Truth."

Adams isn't the slightest bit worried about the distinction between tokens and types, and is quite happy to acknowledge that human beings assign language its purpose and function. Thus (Adams, p. 361):

For example, the spoken and written statements 'It is day' have been taken over by the linguistic community to signify that it is day ...

Again (*ibid.*):

Apparently assuming that the linguistic community has thus endowed such conventional signs with a natural telos, ...

(Even if "the linguistic community" isn't any single individual, it's definitely not God. So God isn't the only source of things' teleologies for Adams.)

Besides, it would be pretty hard to make the claim that, for Anselm, creatures (in particular human beings) don't have the power to produce things as efficient causes, although of course that wouldn't amount to full-fledged creation. For Anselm is continually using the example of the human artisan who produces something in accordance with his pre-existing mental plan.

He does this, e.g., in *Monologion*, Chap. 11 (p. 19), where he is explaining further the third of the three kinds of "utterances" he distinguished back in Chap. 10:

... a craftsman first conceives in his mind what he afterwards makes into a completed work in accordance with the conception in his mind.

Again, in the "ontological argument" in *Prosl.*, Chap. 2, we get the following little explanation of the difference between merely "existing in the mind" and "being understood to exist in reality" (p. 82):

When a painter, for example, thinks out in advance what he is going to paint, he has it in his understanding, but he does not yet understand that it exists, since he has not yet painted it. But once he has painted it, he both has it in his understanding and understands that it exists because he has now painted it.

So, unlike Visser/Williams, Adams is perfectly happy to grant that human beings can produce things, and that they can assign them a teleology—including natural-language statements (whether types or tokens she's not concerned).

Again, in a somewhat surprising endnote in their *Companion* article (pp. 220–21 n. 10), Visser/Williams say:

Note that if Anselm thought of propositions as a kind of mental language, as some later medieval thinkers would, then he would have no need to suppose that God creates natural-language statement-types. For then utterances would express mental language or thought, which is the same in all human beings because it is a function of the powers we were given by God. In this way the truth of statements could be analyzed in terms of the truth of thought or mental language. Unfortunately, Anselm does not think of propositions in this way.

I called this “surprising” because, while it may be true that Anselm doesn’t usually talk in terms of a mental language for human beings, he most definitely does have the notion of mental language—because God thinks in it. Recall *Monologion*, Chap. 10, where Anselm talks about God’s “utterance” or “word” as proceeding purely conceptually, “in his reason” (*Monologion*, p. 17).

Adams picks up on this in her paper (p. 355):

Hence, speech is preeminently mental, the speech of reason thinking the essences of things ...

Again, I’m not sure how all this shakes out in playing off Adams’s paper against the Visser/Williams paper in the *Companion*.

The Supreme Truth

OK, now we’ve talked about truth in the context of statements, opinion (that is, judgments), the will, actions, the senses, and the being of things. What about the highest truth, the supreme truth? Recall, back at the very beginning of the dialogue, the Student reminded Anselm (= the Master) of what he had said back in the *Monologion*, Chap. 18, where the supreme being = the supreme truth. The Student wanted to know whether that’s the truth we are talking about in all cases.

In all the other contexts we’ve talked about, we’ve seen that truth turns out to be rectitude (rightness). So it’s not surprising that, right at the beginning of *On Truth*, Chap. 10 (p. 133), we extrapolate and say that the highest truth is likewise rectitude.

But there’s a problem. In all the earlier contexts, we said, we had two linkages: (a) the link between a thing’s teleology, “what it was made for,” and what it ought to be or do—and recall, the word is ‘debet’, which means “owes” and from which we get “debt.” And (b) the link between what a thing ought to be or do and rectitude or “rightness.” The latter link, I suggested, was—as far as I could see—purely a terminological matter.

But God of course owes nothing to anything, and isn’t in debt to anything; it would even be hard to make sense out of saying God is in debt to himself.

Again, it doesn’t make any sense to talk about what God was “made for”; he wasn’t made at all. So God doesn’t really have any teleology in that sense. It does make sense, of

course, to talk about the purpose or teleology God has in doing things, a purpose he's not assigned but adopts for himself. This is the purpose of creation, and of the various things in creation. But of course that purpose is just another way of talking about the purpose "for which" those other things were made. So we've made no progress if we're trying to explain how God can be the supreme truth.

As Visser/Williams observe, the problem here is whether we're just equivocating between (i) when we talk about the truth of statements or opinions or whatever in terms of their rightness and (ii) when we're talking about God's truth in terms of rightness—whether we mean one thing when we're talking truth in the case of creatures and another thing entirely when we're talking about truth in the case of God.

In fact, I think we can put the point more sharply: It's not just whether we're talking about two different things but whether we're talking about anything at all when we're talking about God's "rightness." Earlier, "rightness" was just another way of talking about what a thing ought to be or do, but that certainly doesn't apply to God.

Again, through the earlier "linkages," rightness was another way of talking about a thing's teleology. But that doesn't apply to God either, except as just a roundabout way of talking about the creature's teleology—which, again, means we've not really made any progress.

So what's left?

Visser/Williams try to explain this in terms of the supreme truth's being the cause of other truths. See Visser/Williams p. 217 and *Basic Writings* p. 133 (Chap. 10):

Do you also see that this rectitude is the cause of all other truths and rectitudes, and nothing is the cause of it? [And the Student says "yes."]

But what are we talking about when we talk about the supreme truth's "rectitude"?

Perhaps we can view this in roughly Platonic fashion, so that the supreme being is "rightness" only in the sense that it serves as the exemplar and standard by which other things are judged to be more or less right, as they ought to be and as they are made to be (teleologically). And this seems to be approximately the way Visser and Williams are arguing.

But that broadly Platonic picture seems to conflict with another thing Visser/Williams argue (p. 217): The supreme Truth is in fact the ONLY truth. In other words, in response to the Student's question at the outset of the dialogue (*Basic Writings*, p. 119), whether we're always talking about God when we're talking about truth, the answer is yes. As Visser and Williams say (p. 218), this:

... is not a standard Platonic maneuver of the sort that we see in his account of goodness [e.g., in Monologion, Chap. 1]. That is, he is not arguing that since various things are true, there must be something that is true in the highest degree and has its truth from itself rather than from another. Anselm in fact never argues in this way that God is true, as he

argues that God is just, good, and so forth. ... So the unity of truth is not the unity of a property in its various instances [the “Platonic” approach], but strict numerical unity. There is one truth because Truth is God, who is one.

See also *On Truth*, Chap. 13: “That there is one truth in all true things.”

In the end, Anselm doesn’t like to talk about the truth of this or of that if that is taken to imply that there are multiple truths. He seems to be happier talking about the truth for this or that. For Anselm, there is only one truth, but with respect to x it works one way, and with respect to y it works another.

Loose Ends in *On Truth*

Earlier we said that truth is not just rightness, but that there is something else we need to take account of. This comes up in *On Truth*, Chap. 11.

It turns out that truth is not just any old rightness, but (p. 135), “rectitude perceptible only by the mind.” (In other words, we’re not talking about the “rightness” of a right angle, for instance.)

I should also point that there is an extremely interesting discussion in Visser/Williams, pp. 210–13, that I don’t know quite how to evaluate. They argue that Anselm is committed to holding that the same situation both ought and ought not to be, although from different perspectives. As they quote Anselm (p. 212—from *On Truth*, Chap. 8, *Basic Writings*, pp. 129–30):

Then the same thing both ought to be and ought not to be. It ought to be, in that God, without whose permission it could not come about, acts wisely and well in permitting it, but if we consider the one whose evil will instigates the action, it ought not to be.

Generalizing, they observe (p. 213):

So we are left with a theory of truth according to which one and the same statement is true or false depending on the context of assessment.

In this connection, recall our discussion of the two truths of statements back in *On Truth*, Chap. 2. This is similar, but not quite the same sort of thing. Here we have the truths of actions.

They also argue (p. 212) that neither of these “contexts” of assessment or perspectives is to be privileged, so that we really are left with a perspectivalist theory of truth. I don’t know what to make of this, but I find the following suggestion extremely provocative (p. 213):

We do not have the space in this essay pursue these implications, but we will note that there can be no fully adequate account of Anselm's views on human freedom, grace, providence, and divine foreknowledge without a recognition that modal statements do not, for Anselm, have context-independent truth values. Indeed, if Anselm's perspectivalism can be defended, it opens up philosophically promising avenues for discussions of those perennially vexing issues.

They also point out in footnote 18 at the end of their chapter (p. 221):

It is important not to confuse this claim with the superficially similar (and relatively uncontroversial) claim that propositional content, and hence the truth-value, of an utterance can change depending on the circumstances of the utterance. Anselm holds the much stronger and counterintuitive view that one and the same utterance, with just one determinate propositional content and in one determinate set of circumstances, can have different truth-values according to different ways of assessing the utterance.

Justice

Finally, I want to call your attention to what appears to be a side-issue in *On Truth*, but will come up essentially in the other "Philosophical Dialogues": the notion of justice.

Anselm argues in Chap. 12 to the conclusion that justice is "rectitude of will preserved for its own sake" (p. 139).

Note that rectitude of will is not something perceptible by the senses, and must therefore be rectitude perceptible by the mind alone. Therefore, it must be truth; in fact, it is a kind of truth in the will (Chap. 4)—preserved for its own sake.

To say justice is rectitude of will preserved for its own sake is just to say that it doesn't count as justice (although it would still count as truth) if you preserve rectitude of will because it's the policy that PAYS, or for some other reason.

This is a very Kantian notion, the idea of doing your duty because it's your duty.

Anselm on Free Choice

In this connection, I want to talk about two works of Anselm's more or less simultaneously: **(a)** *On Freedom of Choice* (which I'll probably end up calling *On Free Will*, because that's the translation of the title I'm most used to—even though Williams's is strictly more correct), and **(b)** *On the Fall of the Devil*.

Secondary literature:

- Visser/Williams in *Companion*, Chap. 8: “Anselm’s Account of Freedom.” (This is a good paper, but not as provocative perhaps as their chapter on truth.)
- Several items you can find by looking through the list of things on E-Reserves. But I want to call your particular attention to two items by Calvin Normore:
 - “Picking and Choosing: Anselm and Ockham on Choice.”
 - “Goodness and Rational Choice in the Early Middle Ages.”

Both of these (and a lot of the rest of the secondary literature on this) are on Anselm and other people—usually later people, since Anselm’s views here are innovative (not just variations on themes seen earlier in the Middle Ages, as for instance the *Monologion* is), as well as being influential.

The question that leads off *On Freedom of Choice* is what free choice is, and in particular whether it requires the ability to sin. The *On the Fall of the Devil* is not so much about what free choice is as about the philosophical psychology of free choice in actual practice.

Here’s the opening of *On Freedom of Choice* (p. 147):

Student. Since free choice seems to be INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE GRACE, PREDESTINATION AND FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD [NB: Compare the full title of the so called *De Concordia* (p. 361): “On the Harmony [i.e., compatibility] of God’s Foreknowledge, Predestination, and Grace with Free Choice], I want to know what this freedom of choice is, and whether we always have it. [Note there are two questions here.] For if freedom of choice is “the ability to sin and not to sin,” as some are accustomed to say [I have no idea who says that], and we always have that ability, then how is it that we ever need grace? [This is the problem of Pelagianism: if we always have free choice, and free choice includes the power of not sinning, then we can save ourselves from sin under our own power, so what is the use of grace?—St. Augustine got very exercised about this, and wrote a lot about what he thought of as the perils of this view.] On the other hand, if we do not always have it, why is sin imputed to us [= blamed on us] when we sin without free choice? [I.e., why are we blamed if we can’t help it?]

Teacher. I don’t think freedom of choice is the power to sin and not to sin. [So he’s disagreeing with the suggested definition.] After all, if this were its definition, then neither God nor the angels, who cannot sin, would have free choice—which it is impious to say.

Note some things by way of background here:

- Obviously God can't be said to be able to sin, even though we do say God is omnipotent and also want to say God has free choice. On the first point, we've already seen to some extent in *Prosl.*, Chap. 7, how God is omnipotent even though there are lots of things he can't do. For present purposes, however, the point to note is that Anselm wants to say that God has free choice in exactly the same sense we do. There's no appeal here to the "mysterious ways of God," as we seem to get, for instance, back in the *Proslogion* when we're talking about how God's justice is compatible with his mercy. And there's no implicit doctrine of analogical predication with respect to God, famous to fans of Thomas Aquinas. No, there's a univocal notion of free choice applicable to God and to human beings.
- He talks about God or the angels. He means "good angels" here, not the devils, who are "fallen angels." The picture here is this: To begin with, all the angels were both able to sin and able not to sin. Some angels chose to sin, and they are now what we call devils. Other angels chose not to sin, and they are the good angels. But the crucial point is: the latter, the good angels, have now been confirmed in their choice, and are no longer able to sin—even though, Anselm insists, we want to say they still have free choice!
- An analogous thing holds for the devils: once they sinned, they are now no longer able NOT to sin, even though Anselm will say they still have free choice. And, although he doesn't mention the devils in these opening lines, they too would provide counterexamples to the claim that free will is the ability both to sin AND not to sin.

So what is free choice? That's the real question of the dialogue.

The question of *On the Fall of the Devil* is in a way more interesting. The question why the Devil fell [= sinned] is much harder than the question why Adam and Eve fell in the Garden of Eden. They were tempted by the Devil in the guise of a serpent. But there was nobody to tempt the Devil himself.

Furthermore, to begin with the angels were not created in some kind of neutral state. No, they were initially all in a state of happiness or blessedness. And the Devil—i.e., Satan, traditionally the chief of the fallen angels—was a very high ranking angel and suffered from no lack of good sense. The angels, of course, aren't omniscient (that's reserved for God), but they're definitely not stupid. So here was the Devil, who was sitting there to begin with in a state of happiness. He had a very good deal going for him, was smart enough to know it, and had nobody around to tempt him. So how could he have managed to sin? It's a very good question!

That's the agenda for our two dialogues. Let's turn back now to *On Freedom of Choice*.

In Chap. 1, as we've seen, Anselm maintains that the ability to sin cannot be implied by free choice. In fact, he argues, you're freer if you will the right way and cannot go wrong (= sin) than you are if you will the right way and can go wrong. (In other words, the good

angels are freer now than they were at the outset.) The Student at first doesn't see this point (p. 147):

S. I don't see why a will isn't freer when it is capable of both.

T. Do you not see that someone who has what is fitting and expedient [roughly = "beneficial"—and note that 'fitting' and 'expedient' here are supposed to more or less interchangeable, so that we're not talking about two things] in such a way that he cannot lose it is freer than someone who has it in such a way that he can lose it and be seduced into what is unfitting and inexpedient?

For example, suppose you have a fabulous fortune, but are in a position where you could lose it any moment by a rash financial decision. Aren't you in a sense less free than you would be if you didn't have to worry about all that and your fortune were in the form of an iron-clad, guaranteed trust fund?

You may not find that example persuasive, since it suggests that being free for Anselm isn't so much a freedom to do various things as it is a kind of freedom from worry. In any case, let's go on.

In Chap. 3, Anselm asks (p. 150):

T. For what purpose do you think they [= angels and human beings] had this freedom of choice: in order to attain what they willed, or in order to will what they ought and what was expedient for them to will?

S. In order to will what they ought to and what was expedient to will.

T. So they had freedom of choice for the sake of rectitude of will—since as long as they willed what they ought to, they had rectitude of will.

Note the link-ups once again, as we saw back in *On Truth*: between teleology ("for what purpose") and normativity ("ought"), and between both of those and rectitude ("rightness").

And all of these are here linked with what is "expedient" for a thing. I'm not quite sure what 'expedient' means in this context.

Now we're told (p. 150) "they"—i.e., angels and human beings (at least Adam and Eve)—were initially given this rightness of will, although Adam and Eve and some of the angels lost it ("abandoned" it, as the text says). (There are special problems of "original sin" in connection with us, who inherit the sin of Adam and do NOT start off with a "right will.")

Now (p. 151):

S. ... And they didn't receive freedom in order [NB: teleology again] to reclaim, by their own power, the rectitude they had abandoned, since such

rectitude was given to them in order that they might never abandon it ...
The only remaining possibility, then, is that freedom of choice was given to the rational nature in order that it might preserve the rectitude of will it had received.

Furthermore, the Student and the Master go on to agree that this freedom of choice is given for the purpose of retaining or preserving rectitude of will for its own sake. It won't do to say that free choice was given for the purpose of preserving rectitude of will because that's what pays, let's say, or because if you don't you'll go to hell, or for any other extraneous reason.

So, the Teacher concludes (p. 151):

T. Therefore, since every freedom is a power, freedom of choice is the power to preserve rectitude of will for the sake of rectitude itself.

This is Anselm's definition of freedom of choice. (See also Chap. 13.) Notice what he's done: he has defined freedom of choice in terms of its teleology. Freedom of choice is the ability or power to do what it was made for. And that's not just a vacuous move, since we're told what it was made for: to preserve rectitude of will for its own sake.

Despite Anselm's declared intention of finding a definition of free choice that applies univocally to God and rational creatures, it's a little hard to see how this definition applies to God. As we saw in discussing *On Truth*, it's hard to see how the notion of rightness makes any sense when applied to God, particularly if it's linked to the notion of ought and the notion of a thing's teleology or what it was made for, since neither of those applies to God. The definition of free choice, then, inherits these problems from the *On Truth*.

In any case, this is Anselm's definition of free choice.

Recall, back in *On Truth*, Chap. 12, we defined justice (p. 139) as: rectitude of will preserved for its own sake.

Put this together now with our definition of freedom of will, and you get the result that free choice = the capacity for justice, the power to be just, and the purpose of free choice is in order for its possessor to be just.

But how can we be said to have the power to be just if we've lost justice by sinning and can't get it back without special help ("grace") from God? Or, to put it another way, how can we be said now to have the power to preserve rightness of will if we don't even have rightness of will? And how can the Devil be said still to have the power of preserving rightness of will if he no longer has it to preserve? As the Student says (p. 151):

S. It is indeed clear. Now as long as the rational nature had rectitude, it could preserve what it had. After it has abandoned rectitude, however, how can it preserve what it does not have? Therefore, if there is no

rectitude that can be preserved, there is no free choice that can preserve it.
For one cannot preserve what one does not have.

The Teacher replies with an answer that sounds promising but that leaves out an important factor. He gives a parallel (p. 152):

T. ... No one who has vision is said to be entirely unable to see a mountain.

And he goes on to say that if we have vision [*i.e.*, the sense faculty], there's a perfectly good sense in saying we have the power to see a mountain even if there's no mountain there.

This highlights the fact that, for Anselm, the question what powers or abilities a thing has is an ontological matter, not just a matter of what we can stick in the direct object of a judgment about possibilities. Granted, if there's no mountain there, I can't see it no matter how good my eyesight. Still, adding a mountain wouldn't change the ontology of me in the slightest, and in that sense wouldn't change the powers I have.

I have the power of seeing a mountain in the sense that I could see it if one were there. So too, I have the power of preserving rectitude of will, even though I don't have rectitude of will—in the sense that if I DID have it, I COULD preserve it.

This sounds like a promising approach. But I said it leaves out an important factor. In fact, on p. 153 (Chap. 4) the Teacher says something that may be confusing:

T. So when there's nothing there for us to see, we're in total darkness, and our eyes are closed or blindfolded, we still have the power to see any visible thing—so far as it pertains to us. What, therefore, is there to prevent us from having the power to preserve rectitude of will for the sake of rectitude itself, even in the absence of rectitude, as long we have reason, by which we can know rectitude, and will, by which we can retain it? ...

What's perhaps confusing here is the talk about the case where I can't see the object simply because it's not there in front of me, I'm in darkness, or I've shut my eyes or blindfolded myself. In that case, all I have to do to see the object is just go to where it is, wait until daylight or carry a torch, and open my eyes or take off my blindfold. So too in the case of the mountain. I can always see the mountain if I go to where the mountain is, in the daytime and open my unblindfolded eyes.

But in the case of rectitude of will I can't do that. Once I lose rectitude of will, there's nothing I can do to retrieve it. And yet, Anselm says, I still have the power to preserve it.

Take another example: Suppose I have a stone and also have the power to keep it. Then if I throw the stone across a big ditch so that I can't go retrieve it, I nevertheless still have the power to keep the stone in the sense that nothing has changed ontologically in me.

In fact, Anselm somewhat boldly claims that not even God can take away rectitude of will (Chap. 8, p. 159):

T. ... He can indeed reduce to nothing the whole substance that he has made from nothing, but he cannot take away rectitude from a will that has it.

The Visser/Williams Paper in *Companion*, “Anselm’s Account of Freedom”

Notice what is not suggested anywhere in Anselm’s definition of free choice: alternative possibilities, the ability to do otherwise. Anselm simply doesn’t think this is necessary for free will.

In modern discussions, there are two competing notions of free choice or free will:

- Compatibilism: free choice is compatible with causal determinism. (Freedom = ability to do what you want, or something like that, whether you’re able to do anything else, or able to want anything else, or not.)
- Non-compatibilism: free choice requires the real ability to do otherwise. Visser and Williams refer to what is sometimes called the Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP) (p. 186).

Anselm rejects non-compatibilism (PAP) as part of the notion of free choice, even though in many typical cases we do have alternative possibilities open to us (as all the angels did at the outset, but don’t any longer).

But it doesn’t follow that Anselm is a compatibilist. Visser and Williams argue that causal determinism is in fact incompatible with free choice. This will take us in just a few moments into the dialogue *On the Fall of the Devil*.

But basically, Visser and Williams argue that while causal determinism is incompatible with Anselm’s notion of free choice, Anselm’s notion doesn’t require alternative possibilities (PAP). What it requires is only that the agent be the initiator of its own actions. (So this is a third account of free choice, in addition to compatibilism and non-compatibilism.)

Ultimately, a free agent for Visser/Williams is an agent that stands at the head of a causal chain. This is sufficient for the kind of freedom we need for moral responsibility, they think. But what kind of causality are we talking about? Certainly not Humean mechanical causality—billiard balls bumping into one another. Rather, it’s an almost juridical notion—who’s responsible? (There is a similar notion of free choice in St. Augustine.) That’s what is appropriate here. It doesn’t require alternative possibilities.

On the Fall of the Devil

It's not clear to me this really is the best way to think of Anselm's notion of free choice. It seems to me one might very well argue Anselm is a compatibilist after all, that free choice really has to be compatible with causal determinism for him.

The difficulty here is in figuring out exactly what it would mean for Anselm to say that we are at the head of the causal chain of some of our actions. That's not a notion that's altogether clear.

One Classical Picture

Let's go back and look at a fairly familiar and traditional medieval ethical picture that can be found quite definitely in Augustine, and in Boethius's *Consolation*. It has its roots in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and—even further back—in Plato.

The picture is this (I am NOT saying this is *Anselm's* picture—we'll have to see):

According to this picture, the ultimate goal of all our actions, whether we realize it or not, is the good. For Augustine and Boethius, of course—and ultimately for Anselm too—the “good” is going to turn out to be God, but that doesn't matter for now. We might, for instance, think instead that different kinds of things have different “goods,” depending on their natures—what kind of thing they are—and that their “good” is simply to fulfill their nature, or something like that, without putting that in terms of God. It doesn't matter for now.

The point is that, on this view, our ultimate goal is not something we choose. It's something given to us, assigned to us from outside (by God or nature or whatever). We can't help but pursue the good.

Choice, then, is not a matter of choosing our end or goal, but of choosing the means to achieve that end. We don't deliberate about ends, but only about how to get there from here.

On this picture, the only thing for us to do in a practical context is to decide on the means. Once we've done that, the action follows inevitably; nothing more is needed. There's nothing more that has to happen before we move into action. That doesn't mean we will succeed in achieving our goal, of course; there may well be obstacles. But we will automatically move into action once we've settled on the means to achieve the goal we automatically have.

On this picture, the only place where we have any real input into this process—and so the only place where we stand a chance of standing at the head of a causal chain (if that's the way to look at it)—is in picking the means.

Notice: There is nothing about this picture so far that requires that there be more than one means to the end (that requires PAP). It may very well be that there is only one way to get to our goal from here, but we still have to settle on what that one way is. Or, even if

there are in fact many means to the end, it may appear to us that there's only one means, and we have to settle on that.

The problems with this picture are well known. A person with a goal he does not get to choose will end up making a “wrong choice”, in the sense of choosing a means that will not lead to his goal, only if he is either misinformed or confused.

This is what makes *akrasia* (= weakness of will) so mysterious in the Aristotelian tradition.

To sum it up, on this picture the will is the slave of the intellect. We have the so called Socratic Paradox: “No one knowingly does evil.” Evil is the result of ignorance, either from a lack of information or from a lack of reasoning skills.

In fact, on this picture it's not even clear why we should continue to talk in terms of two mental faculties at all—the intellect and then, in addition, something else called the will.

Other Views

But there are other pictures too. (Again, I'm still not saying where Anselm fits here. I'm just setting out a range of theories.)

In the later Middle Ages, some people thought the picture we just described didn't give enough power to the will.

John Duns Scotus (c. 1265–1308), for example—see Adams's paper in *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham*, “Ockham on Will, Nature, and Morality”—argued that while we can't help desiring the good and automatically have a tendency toward the good, WE DON'T HAVE TO ACT ON THAT TENDENCY. We don't have to make the good the end of an action. We might, for instance, just refrain from acting altogether. This is what makes the difference between a natural agent, which always and necessarily acts the same way when under the same conditions, and a voluntary agent which doesn't necessarily do that.

So, for Scotus, the outcome of deliberating about the means to achieve our natural *telos* is not inevitably followed by going into action. And this is so no matter what our intellect tells us, even if our intellect is right! The will is not the slave of the intellect.

William of Ockham (c. 1285–1347)—see Adams's paper again—went even further. For him, not only can we refrain from acting in accordance with the outcome of our deliberation about the means to our *telos*. We can also act contrary to that *telos*. I can, with full knowledge and recognition of what I'm doing, deliberately act against my own self-interest (my own orientation). I can deliberately make myself unhappy. For Ockham, that's exactly what happened in the case of the Fall of the Devil. For Ockham, therefore, I choose the goals of my action, not just the means to those goals—not just the means but the ends as well. Nevertheless, he agrees that we still have a natural tendency toward the good.

The Theory of the Two Wills

Where does Anselm weigh in on all this? Well, Anselm does not think we can choose not to act at all (contrary to Scotus). In a sense he does think we get to choose what end or goal to follow (in agreement with Ockham), but only in a sense. For, contrary to Ockham, Anselm holds that we do not choose our goals at random. Instead, we select from two orientations given us by God himself.

Anselm has a theory sometimes called the two will theory. Rational agents have, so to speak, two wills. See, e.g., *On the Fall of the Devil*, Chap. 12 (*Basic Writings*, p. 191):

... we commonly speak of two goods and of two evils that are contrary to them. One good is that which is called "justice," whose contrary evil is injustice. The other good is what I think can be called "the advantageous"; its opposite evil is the disadvantageous. Now not everyone wills justice, and not everyone avoids injustice, whereas not merely every rational nature, but indeed everything that can be aware of it wills the advantageous and avoids the disadvantageous.

Again, Chap. 4 (p. 177):

Now he [= the Devil] could not will anything but (1) justice [which he DIDN'T end up willing] or (2) something advantageous.

Now, to begin with, all the angels (including those who would ultimately fall), as well as Adam and Eve, had both wills:

- a will for justice, and
- a will for the advantageous—what we might familiarly call "self-interest."

Note also in the passage from Chap. 4 (p. 177) I just read you, Anselm goes on immediately to say:

For happiness (*beatitudo* = "blessedness"), which every rational creature wills, consists in advantageous things.

So happiness just consists of having your interests fulfilled. Self-interest or the will for the advantageous, therefore, is just another way of talking about the will to be happy.

A long digression. To begin with, then, all rational creatures (angels, Adam and Eve) had both kinds of wills: the will for justice and the will for happiness or the advantageous—a will based on "self-interest."

Of course, that doesn't mean they have two mental faculties known as "will," as if they all started off with some kind of multiple-personality disorder.

So what might it mean instead?

Well, one thing it might mean is that rational creatures have two distinct natural teleologies built into them.

Recall how we said back in *On Truth*, Chap. 2, all statements are made for the purpose of signifying what is the case. On the other hand, a statement is designed to signify the way it does, no matter what is the case. So a statement has two purposes for which it is made, two teleologies, and they may conflict.

So too, remember how in *On Truth*, Chap. 8, where we were talking about what ought and what ought not to be the case, we said that evil deeds ought not to be the case, since they are evil, after all, and yet from the point of view of God's overall providential plan, they ought to be the case. (This is the "perspectivalist" theory of truth that Visser and Williams talk about.) Insofar as ought in *On Truth* is cashed out in terms of a thing's teleology, once again we have multiple teleologies for a thing.

Visser and Williams emphasized this point, and suggested that this kind of perspectivalism might well have important applications in other areas of Anselm's thought—including the matter of free choice.

So, therefore, perhaps that's what's going on here in *On the Fall of the Devil*. Rational agents have two natural tendencies, two teleologies, and in that sense two wills:

- a will for advantage (what's in my interest, a selfish will). In effect, a will to be happy; and
- a will for justice.

In both cases, of course—the will for happiness and the will for justice—what we're really willing all along is the good = God. Either willing God as "what will make me happy" or else willing God as "where justice is ultimately going to be based," or something like that. (I'm not quite sure how to work that out.)

In short, we have willing the good under the aspect of advantage (happiness) and willing the good under the aspect of justice. (The metaphysics of this "under the aspect" talk is mysterious to me.)

Nevertheless, while I think we can make good sense of two-will talk in teleological terms like this, and it does fit in with a lot of other things Anselm says throughout these "Philosophical Dialogues," I don't think this can be what Anselm is talking about here in *On the Fall of the Devil*.

For Anselm thinks that now, after the Fall of the Devil, he no longer has the will for justice and has only the will for advantage or happiness (which he's conspicuously not getting, since he's damned forever to hell). See *On the Fall of the Devil*, Chap. 17 (p. 199):

T. Now that he [= the Devil] has forsaken justice and retains only the will for happiness that he had before, can the angel who abandoned justice return by his own power to the will for justice ...?

And the answer is going to be no, he's stuck! Notice that at first, Anselm says justice has been abandoned, not the will for it. But he goes on to say that only the will for happiness remains, and he can't go back to the will for justice. So it seems he abandons not only justice, but the will for it as well.

But surely this can't mean the Devil has somehow got rid of his natural God-given teleology. This would mean that the creature can change God's purposes.

So what does Anselm mean by this talk of two wills? It doesn't mean two distinct faculties or powers. And I just argued that it doesn't mean two God-assigned teleologies either.

Rather, I suggest, it means two psychological drives—desires.

It's easy to recognize the desire for advantage in ourselves. That's just self-interest. But do we all also have a drive for justice—psychologically?

No—but then Anselm doesn't say we do. Rather, all he says is that the angels did at first, and so did Adam and Eve. **End of digression.**

Still, how do these “two wills” (drives) help us to explain the fall of the Devil—or how free choice actually works in practice?

Well, in *On the Fall of the Devil*, Chaps. 13–14, Anselm performs an interesting thought-experiment:

Suppose an angel was created with only the will for happiness—only the will for advantage, only self-interest. (We could also use a human being as an example here. In fact, in Chap. 12, Anselm says this is exactly the way brute animals actually are.)

Such a will, he says, is not really a morally judgeable will. It's neither just nor unjust—in the blameworthy sense.

It's not just because it doesn't want to be; all it wants, by hypothesis, is its own advantage. Even if it somehow wanted rectitude of will, it would want it only for the sake of its own advantage, not because it was right. Therefore, it would not be just because justice is rectitude of will preserved for its own sake. (Compare *On Truth*, Chap. 12, p. 139.)

And it's not unjust in the sense of being blameworthy. Why not? Because (*On the Fall of the Devil*, Chap. 14, p. 195), its choice would be necessitated. It couldn't refrain from choosing its own advantage.

And the same thing will apply if we assume an angel that is created with only a will for justice! Its choice too would be necessitated.

For Visser and Williams, the point here doesn't seem to be the lack of real alternatives. That's not why its choice is necessitated. Rather the point is that, in either case, the angel's decision is not its own. It doesn't stand at the head of a causal chain.

It acts only as the result of its desires. It's not praiseworthy or blameworthy, but purely natural and automatic.

Anselm argues (Chap. 14, p. 195), it has to want both justice and happiness. Then it can choose which one to give priority to. If an angel chooses to prefer justice, its rewarded with both justice and happiness. If it chooses advantage, it ends up getting neither.

Why isn't this the "Principle of Alternative Possibilities" (PAP) we discussed earlier in connection with the Visser/Williams paper? It may look very much like it. But Visser and Williams argue that this isn't the point. Rather, the point is that the angel's decision is its own.

If it chooses justice, then anything it does to go after justice is merely following out its innate inclinations (provided by God). That by itself is no more meritorious than a stone's falling.

Likewise, if it choose to go after advantage, all it does to pursue advantage is just following its innate disposition.

Still—why isn't this PAP? Well, **watch**:

Here's the crucial move: The angel does not realize that if it gives priority to advantage over justice, it's doing to be punished, so that it doesn't get either advantage or justice.

It's like the Socratic Paradox—except that here it's not just that ignorance is required for choosing evil, but also for morally praiseworthy choice.

The angel has got to think that maybe it's to its advantage not to choose justice!

Once it chooses, of course, it sees that the wrong choice is punished, and at that point it knows that it's to its advantage to choose justice, and therefore there's no longer any drive to lead him to the wrong choice. Not a drive for justice (because it isn't just), and not a desire for advantage (because there's no advantage in it).

So a good angel cannot now sin, any more than a fallen angel can act justly. But they are still free because the choice was still theirs.

So, alternatives are needed at first (for creatures, not for God), but are not needed any longer once the choice is made.

A problem for this theory: How does it apply to us—now, after the Fall (of Adam and Eve)? Now we postlapsarian humans have only the will for advantage, and always did. Why aren't we therefore exactly in the morally neutral position of the brute animals? I don't know the answer to this.

We have then:

- an analysis of freedom of choice;
- an analysis of the "fall of Satan"—both of how it happened and of why he is blameworthy for his fall (because he is at the head of the causal change in that decision);
- a similar analysis of the goog angels—why they are praiseworthy (for the same reason);

But we have no analysis of how postlapsarian humanity (that is, human beings born after the “Original Sin” of Adam and Eve) is morally praiseworthy or blameworthy.

The *De Concordia*

Now I want to talk about the *De concordia*, the full translation of the title of which is *On the Harmony of God’s Foreknowledge, Predestination, and Grace with Free Choice*, in Williams’s *Basic Writings*, beginning on p. 361.

Recall, at the beginning of *On Freedom of Choice*, the Student asks (p. 147):

Since free choice seems to be incompatible with the grace, predestination, and foreknowledge of God, ...

That was in 1080–86, while Anselm was still at Bec. Much later, after he had moved over to England and had become Archbishop of Canterbury, he returned to the topic in his *De Concordia* (= “The Harmony of God’s Foreknowledge, Predestination, and Grace with Free Choice”).

Let me say some things about the title. First of all, notice that there’s nothing in the title about human freedom. As far as the actual content of the book is concerned, the part about free choice will apply equally well to angelic freedom and even to divine freedom.

Second, the word *Concordia*, which Williams translates as “harmony.” Literally, it means “concord”—that is, for all three of these topics, their hearts are together.

Except for some letters, this is the very last thing Anselm wrote. It was done in 1107–08. He was increasingly troubled by his health at this time, and died in 1109.

Although the work is obviously intended as a kind of follow-up to the *Three Dialogues*, and particularly to *On Free Choice*, the *De Concordia* is not in fact a dialogue at all; it’s a piece of sustained argumentation.

The work is divided into three sections (or “questions” or “articles”), each one trying to reconcile free choice with one of the other three notions mentioned in the title: God’s foreknowledge, predestination and grace, respectively.

What is the difference among these three questions?

The first one, foreknowledge vs. free choice, is just the classical old question: How can God know what we’re going to do before we do it? If he now knows I’m going to rob a bank tomorrow, then in what sense do I now have any choice about it? For that matter, since God has forever known I’m going to rob a bank tomorrow, in what sense did I ever have any choice about it? And, likewise, if God has always known what he is going to do tomorrow, then in what sense is he free about it?

We’ll discuss this more fully in a moment, but for now let’s just acknowledge that the problem of foreknowledge vs. free choice is often put in terms of causality—as if God’s

knowledge were somehow the cause of our actions. And that would be perhaps a problem for human free choice. But as I say, we'll talk more about that in a little while.

The second problem, discussed in *De Concordia*, q. 2, is predestination vs. free choice. The difference between foreknowledge and predestination is, roughly speaking, the difference between God's knowledge and his will—or perhaps God's knowledge and his action. That is, in predestination, God actually does something.

As usually used, the term means that God actually does something to select who is going to be saved and who isn't. (Sometimes it's used in a narrower sense of selecting for salvation, whereas selecting for damnation is called reprobation. But in both cases, God does something.)

At the beginning of q. 2, Anselm says (p. 372):

Predestination seems to be the same thing as preordination or predetermination [= *praestitutio*—the word is closely related to Leibniz's expression when he's talking about the “preestablished harmony”]. So when God is said to predestine something, we understand this to mean that he preordains it: that is, he determines that it will happen in the future.

Whatever we do about the previous problem, foreknowledge vs. free choice, this second question seems to be inescapably about causality, and so certain potential solutions to the first problem seem perhaps to be closed off for this second one.

The third question is about free choice vs. grace, and is very closely tied to the second article, about predestination. It applies to the particular case of human beings.

As we know from *On the Fall of the Devil*, Satan—and by extension, Adam and Eve after the Fall, and all subsequent human generations as the result of original sin inherited from them—have lost the will for justice, retaining only the will for advantage or happiness. Furthermore, we can't get it back under our own power.

Now Satan and his fellow-devils are stuck; there's nothing going to be done for them. But for human beings there is the possibility for grace. With God's extra help, we can get back the will for justice, and get back justice itself. St. Augustine, in his *On Free Choice of the Will*, describes a master who has a servant. The master tells the servant to perform a certain task. But instead of obeying, the servant jumps down into a deep ditch, and can't get out. If the master punishes the servant, the servant cannot complain that the punishment is unjust since, after all, he can't get out of the ditch, and so can't obey the master. That's the situation we're all in now, after the fall of Adam and Eve. Now with grace (a “gratuity,” a kind of divine “tip”), the master reaches down into the ditch and offers a hand to lift the servant out. This extra helping hand is what we call a “grace.” (There are other kinds of “graces” too, but this is what we're talking about in the present context.)

Now the point is, predestination works through grace. God helps through grace those he predestines to salvation, and doesn't help those who are damned to hell.

So q. 3 is really a continuation of q. 2, with more emphasis on the mechanisms of predestination and reprobation.

I won't be talking about q. 3 in my discussion.

Future Contingents

All of the issues Anselm discusses in the *De Concordia* are variations on a common theme, one that Anselm does not explicitly address there but that he plainly knew and that is obviously in the background of what he does discuss there. This is the so called problem of future contingents.

Let me begin by reading to you a section of Calvin Normore's chapter on "future contingents" from *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 358–81 (not on E-Reserves). I am reading from pp. 358–59:

There is more than one problem of future contingents. There is first the problem raised by Aristotle—that of reconciling the principle of bivalence (the principle that for any sentence P either P is true or not-P is true²) with the view that some claims about the future are contingent, are such that neither the claim nor its denial is necessarily true. Medieval discussions of this problem often rely on our intuitions that the past and the present are 'fixed' in some way in which the future is not, and so these discussion often illuminate medieval views on tense and modality. [Note that there's nothing whatever about KNOWLEDGE in the statement of this background-problem.]

A second problem has to do with the possibility of foreknowledge. Can one hold both that some future event is contingent and that it is foreknown? [Here we ARE talking about knowledge.]

A third problem is specifically theological. Can complete knowledge of the future by an immutable, infallible, impassible God be reconciled with the contingency of some aspects of the future? [THIS is the problem with which Anselm starts off *De Concordia*.]

These are distinct problems. Theories which solve the problem of contingent truth may fail to account for foreknowledge, and theories which account for both future contingent truth and foreknowledge may yet fail to explain how contingent future events, e.g., sins, can be known by a knower who cannot be causally acted upon.

² That's not strictly the "principle of bivalence." The principle of bivalence says there are two truth values—truth and falsehood, no more and no fewer, and that every sentence has one or the other of those truth values. The principle Normore describes here would, as it stands, allow there to be more truth values than two, provided only that, for any sentence P, either P or not-P has the value "true." (Never mind what truth value the other one has, if any.)

Yet all three problems are variations on a single theme. We are inclined to think that there is an objective difference between the past and the future. What has happened happened as a result of earlier events including perhaps actions of our own but now that it has happened it does not depend on anything agents will do. An adult may regret his misspent youth but cannot prevent it. On the other hand what will happen is dependent on what is happening and is, we think, in part dependent on what we and other agents will do. We think that some of what we will do we could avoid. [Notice again: nothing about KNOWLEDGE here.] The problems [note the plural] of future contingents arise because there seem to be various principles which connect every statement about the future with a corresponding statement about the past in such a way that it is impossible for one of the statements to be true and the other false. If any such principle is accepted, our intuitions about the objective difference between past and future may have to be reversed.

This basic problem of future contingents is plainly the background in terms of which Anselm discusses the particular problems of foreknowledge, predestination and grace in the *De Concordia*. And, I say, Anselm knew the general problem. He knew it because it comes up in Aristotle's *On Interpretation*, Chap. 9, a text Anselm knew in Boethius's translation, together with Boethius's commentary on it. In fact, Anselm cites this passage in the *Cur Deus Homo*, Book II, Chap. 17 (p. 318).

This is the famous problem about whether there will be a "sea battle" tomorrow. Without worrying about what exactly Aristotle had in mind (which is not altogether clear), we can motivate the general problem like this:

Let's start with three principles (DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT ON "FUTURE CONTINGENTS"):

1. If it will be the case that p , then it was the case that it will be the case that p . We saw Anselm himself accept something like this back in *Monologion*, Chap. 18, when he argues that truth always exists. Remember, we said, if it is true that I am uttering these words now, then it always was true that I would be uttering these words now. By the same token, although this isn't quite the same thing, it would seem to follow that if I will be uttering different words in our next lecture, then it always was true that I will be uttering those words then. Thus:

$$Fp \rightarrow PFp$$

2. Necessarily, if it was the case that it will be the case that p , then it will be the case that p . That is:

$$\Box(PFp \rightarrow Fp)$$

If it was the case that I will be uttering certain other words in our next lecture,

then it necessarily follows that I will be uttering them. This is an instance of what we sometimes call conditional necessity; it states a necessary connection.

3. **The crucial one.** If it was the case that p , then necessarily it was the case that p . This is not just “conditional necessity”; that is, we’re not just saying it’s a necessary truth that if it was the case then it was the case. No, we’re saying something stronger:

$$Pp \rightarrow \Box Pp$$

This is not logical necessity. We’re not saying it’s an analytic or a priori truth that Columbus sailed to America in 1492, for instance. All we’re talking about is the what Normore described as our sense “that there is an objective difference between the past and the future.” Even though the facts about Columbus are not analytic or a priori, it’s too late to do anything about them now. The past is now settled and nonnegotiable in a way that perhaps the future is not. And in that sense, the past is necessary. This is a perfectly traditional way of talking. You may regret your misspent youth, but it’s too late to prevent it.

Note: There’s not one work in any of these three principles about knowledge.

OK, now let’s put our three principles together.

Let’s take some proposition Fp about a future event—say, “I am going to rob a bank tomorrow.” And let’s suppose by hypothesis it’s true. By principle (1), therefore, it was the case earlier that I will rob a bank tomorrow. By principle (3), therefore, necessarily it was the case that I will rob a bank tomorrow. That is a necessary truth about the past.

Now look at principle (2). There we have a conditional necessity, remember: we can’t have the antecedent without having the consequent. But, we’ve just seen, we can’t help but have the antecedent; it’s a necessary truth about the past. Therefore, we can’t help but have the consequent too. That is, necessarily I am going to rob a bank tomorrow. Even if it’s not an analytic or a priori truth, it’s too late to prevent it now. (What we just did here is called distribution of necessity across implication. That’s a very weak move; there’s no controversy over the legitimacy of that.)

Of course, all this was on the hypothesis that it’s true that I’m going to rob a bank tomorrow. But let’s suppose instead that it’s false. In that case, it’s true that I’m not going to rob a bank tomorrow, and we can run exactly the same argument again, this time with the result that necessarily I am not going to rob a bank tomorrow. It’s too late to do anything to bring it about now.

So no matter how it turns out, whether I will or won’t rob a bank tomorrow, it seems it’s too late to do anything about it now. In fact, we can go further back into the past, with the result that it was always too late to do anything about it. This is the problem Aristotle seems to be talking about in *On Interpretation*, Chap. 9.

This is a doctrine known as logical fatalism. Notice how little it really requires, and how it doesn't require any claims about knowledge.

Medieval Discussions

Now, what does all this have to do with the problems Anselm is discussing in the *De Concordia*, beginning with the problem of foreknowledge vs. free choice?

First of all, we can put the problem of foreknowledge and free choice much more simply than we did the general problem of future contingents a moment ago (see the handout on "Future Contingents"):

1. What must be the case is not subject to our free choice.
2. What God knows must be the case. (There's an ambiguity here, to be sure, and we'll discuss that shortly.)
3. God knows our future actions (since he's omniscient).
4. Therefore, our future actions are not subject to our free choice.

(Notice, incidentally, that exactly the same kind of argument would seem to yield the conclusion that God's foreknowledge is incompatible with his free choice too, not just ours.)

Now I said at the outset that the problem of reconciling foreknowledge with free choice is often put in terms of causality. And you might well think causality is already involved in the earlier problem of future contingents, before we ever bring knowledge into the picture—causality may be involved insofar it's too late now to prevent some future event from occurring, too late to do anything about it now. "Preventing" and "doing," at least in the most familiar cases, sound like matters of causality.

If that's right, then of course the particular problem of foreknowledge vs. free choice, whatever additional features are introduced by bringing knowledge into the picture, is also going to be a causal issue insofar as it inherits that from the more basic problem of future contingents.

Well, maybe, maybe not. But in any case, that's what a lot of medieval authors thought, and Anselm himself speaks this way, as we'll see.

But before we consider Anselm, let's look at Augustine for background and context. One of the earliest discussions of foreknowledge and free choice occurs in Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will*, III, Chap. 1–4. (There are other discussions in Augustine, but I want to focus on this one.)

Like Anselm's *On Free Choice*, Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will* is a dialogue, and in III.1 his interlocutor (Evodius) remarks (translation in the "Library of Liberal Arts" series, p. 85):

if free will has been given in such a way that this movement [of the will] is natural to it, then it [the will] is turned to lesser goods by necessity. [That is, it turns away from the PRIMARY good, God, to lesser goods, and so SINS.] There is no blame to be found where nature and necessity rule.

That is, for Augustine's interlocutor, the notion of moral responsibility, and therefore the notion of praise and blame, require that our wills be free and not such that they make their choices out of necessity.

Well, Augustine and Evodius go on to discuss this, and the question of course arises whether God's foreknowledge of human actions somehow causes them to occur, so that they cannot be free actions in the morally relevant sense. In the course of this, Augustine makes an interesting comment. He says (p. 95):

Your recollection of events in the past does not compel them to occur. In the same way God's foreknowledge of future events does not compel them to take place.

Now the interesting thing about this passage is not whether it answers the question, or even whether it has a hope of answering the question, but the double-occurrence of the word 'compel' in it. Augustine seems to think the question is one of compulsion. The will is free in the relevant sense, and its choices are not necessary in the problematic sense, provided the will is not compelled to choose the way it does.

This makes sense only if Augustine is appealing to a causal notion of necessity here. That is, for Augustine,

x is necessary iff some other y causes x.

And in that case we can say that for Augustine, x is necessary in the sense of being necessitated (caused) by some y.

Now that's Augustine. I brought him up mainly to contrast this view with a much more relevant discussion for Anselm, and that is Boethius's treatment of foreknowledge and free will in *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Book v.

For Augustine, the issue seems to have been one of causality. And Anselm too will continue to link necessity and causality. But for Boethius (who came before Anselm, remember), this is simply irrelevant. It's not a question of which causes which, whether God's foreknowledge causes events to occur, or whether the fact that they are going to occur somehow causes God to know them. Causality simply doesn't come up at all. For him, it's purely a matter of inference and reasoning.

Boethius (Bk. v, pr. 3³) says he rejects one attempted way out of this problem, the attempt that says it is not because (note the causal term) events are foreseen that they will occur, but rather it is because they will occur that they are foreseen. (Augustine accepts at least the first part of this, although not explicitly the second.)

Again, Boethius says causality is simply not the issue here. He gives an analogy (*ibid.*). If a person is sitting, then the claim that he is sitting must be true. And conversely, if the claim that he is sitting is true, then he must be sitting. And this is so—that is, we have this necessity both ways—regardless of your theory about which causes which, if indeed you think causality is involved here at all.

Furthermore, he goes on, it obviously doesn't make any difference if you plug in the future tense here instead of the present. If a person will sit, then the claim that he will sit must be true, and conversely, if the claim that he will sit is true, then he must be going to sit.

Besides, if you are going to appeal to causality at all in this kind of context, then the view that says it isn't because God foresees my future free actions that they will occur but rather the other way around—it's because they're going to occur that God foresees them—runs into a serious theological problem. It would mean that God's knowledge, which is identical to God himself, is causally dependent on creatures. (This is Calvin Normore's third problem he distinguished above: how an impassible, immutable God can know future contingent events.)

Another problem, which Boethius doesn't mention, is that this view would seem to have the effect precede the cause in time—if that bothers you.

No, Boethius says, let's just leave causality out of the picture.

So what does he do instead? Well, he does two things, both of which we find in approximately the same form later on in Anselm. One of them is to bring the notion of eternity into the picture. We'll discuss that later on. But let's look at the other one for now.

To begin with (Book v, pr. 6), Boethius distinguishes two kinds of necessity, which we might call simple and conditional necessity. This is a pretty elementary distinction, but let's be clear about it. As an example of conditional necessity, let's use Boethius's own:

If someone is sitting, then necessarily he is sitting.

As an example of simple necessity, we can take: "Necessarily, $2 + 2 = 4$." Or—in the sense in which we just saw we can speak of the past as being "necessary"—"Necessarily, Columbus sailed to America in 1492." (It wasn't necessary in 1491—in fact, it wasn't even true in 1491 that Columbus sailed [past tense] to America in 1491. But now it is true, and unavoidable. It's "too late" to do anything about it now.)

³ Boethius's *Consolation*, besides being divided into five books, is further divided into alternating passages of prose and poetry. The standard way of referring to the *Consolation* is by book number, and then by either "prose" number ("pr.") or "metrical" number ("m.").

In general, we can say the difference between the two kinds of necessity is just that conditional necessity is the simple necessity OF A CONDITIONAL. That is, in the case of simple necessity we have a proposition of the form:

$$\Box p,$$

whereas in the case of conditional necessity what we have is a special case of this, namely:

$$\Box(p \rightarrow q).$$

In short, conditional necessity is just the simple necessity of a conditional.

Now this is all very elementary, but it's important to be aware of the distinction. For back in our argument that foreknowledge is incompatible with free will, step 2 is ambiguous:

“What God knows must be the case” can be read in the innocuous and true sense in which what we have is conditional necessity (‘K’ = ‘God knows that’):

$$\Box(Kp \rightarrow p).$$

This is true on the general grounds that knowledge implies truth. (You can't know something if it's not even true.) In fact, this is so no matter who does the knowing, whether God or anyone else, and no matter what the tense of ‘p’ is; there's nothing special about the future here.

But, read in this sense, step 2 will not support the above argument that purports to show foreknowledge is incompatible with free will. The argument will be just invalid. In order to get it to work, we need to read step 2 in the stronger sense:

$$Kp \rightarrow \Box p.$$

That is, what we need is not just conditional necessity—the simple necessity of a conditional—but rather a conditional the consequent of which is simply necessary. And, it seems we have no reason to believe this stronger claim when ‘p’ is about the future.

We can accept this stronger reading where ‘p’ is about the past, since we've seen that there's a sense in which the past is necessary. (This is because it's past, not because it's known.) But this doesn't mean the past event wasn't contingent earlier.

We may even want to say the same thing where ‘p’ is about the present. (The present is no longer avoidable.) There's a famous passage in Aristotle (*On Interpretation*, 19^a23-24]) where he says “Everything that is, when it is, necessarily is.” But again, this doesn't mean it was always unavoidable.

Yet we have no reason to hold this about the future.

So it looks as if Boethius has a distinction here that will go a long way toward solving our problem of reconciling foreknowledge with free choice.

There's more to the story here, but before we go on, let's pause to see how this distinction plays out in Anselm.

Anselm on Antecedent and Consequent Necessity

Boethius has no actual names for what we've called simple and conditional necessity, although he does draw the distinction. But Anselm draws a similar if not actually the same distinction, and does have names for the two parts of it. He calls them "antecedent" and "subsequent" or "consequent" necessity.

"Antecedent" necessity is not entirely clear in Anselm. (Simple necessity is not particularly clear in Boethius either, but only because he never really analyzes the notion. The problem with Anselm, however, is that he seems to say different things about antecedent necessity in different places. We don't have that kind of problem with Boethius.)

In *Cur deus homo* II, Chap. 17, Anselm says this (pp. 317–18):

You see, there is antecedent necessity, which is the cause of something's being; and there is subsequent necessity, which the thing itself brings about. It is a case of antecedent and [= that is] efficient necessity when it is said that the heavens revolve because it is necessary that they revolve, whereas it is a case of subsequent necessity—and [= that is] necessity that brings nothing about but rather is brought about—when I say that you are speaking of necessity because you are speaking. For when I say this, I signify that nothing can make it the case that while you are speaking you are not speaking, but not anything is compelling you to speak. For the violence of their natural condition compels the heavens to revolve, whereas no necessity brings it about that you speak. Now wherever there is antecedent necessity there is also subsequent necessity; but it is not the case that where there is subsequent necessity there is automatically also antecedent necessity. For we can say, "It is necessary that the heavens revolve, because they revolve"; but it is not similarly true that you are speaking because it is necessary that you speak.

This is a complicated text, and isn't altogether clear.

First of all, notice the pretty clear linkage of modal notions with causality, as we saw with Augustine. (Boethius didn't actually deny this linkage, but only said it wasn't the issue.) We'll return to this in a moment.

But for now, note that at first it's hard to figure out just what it is that Anselm says is necessary here.

In his example of antecedent necessity, "The heavens revolve because it is necessary that they revolve," it looks as if it's the second part of the claim that is being called necessary.

That is, the heavens have to revolve (by antecedent necessity, the laws of nature), and that's why they do revolve.

And that seems to be repeatedly confirmed throughout the passage when Anselm talks about “antecedent necessity, which is the cause of something's being.” So it seems that Anselm accepts the following reasoning: p causes q . But p is antecedently necessary. Therefore, q .)

In other words, it seems that the picture we have here is that we have something p that is said to be “antecedently necessary,” and it's because of that that something q comes about. And what's confusing here in the example is just that $p = q$.

But I don't think that's the right picture, and the point comes out in the contrast between antecedent and subsequent necessity.

There, in talking about subsequent necessity, he gives the example, “You are speaking of necessity because you are speaking.” That is, given that you are speaking, it's impossible for you also to be not speaking.

We'll talk about subsequent necessity in a moment. But what I want to emphasize for now is what Anselm says immediately after giving his example of subsequent necessity:

For when I say this [= “You are speaking of necessity because you are speaking”], I signify that nothing can make it the case that while you are speaking you are not speaking, but not anything is compelling you to speak.

Now if antecedent and subsequent necessity are meant to exhaust the alternatives (and it seems it is so meant), this means that, where we don't have subsequent necessity (that is, don't have the kind that doesn't involve being compelled), we do have antecedent necessity—which does involve being compelled.

But if that's right, then when we have a case of something p that causes something q to come about, it's the q that is being caused or compelled, not the p , and therefore the q that is antecedently necessary, not the p .

So what I'm suggesting is that, despite the way Anselm talks here—as if what is antecedently necessary is the cause of other things—what he really means is that the antecedently necessary is what is caused or compelled by something.

Now let's look at subsequent necessity in more detail. His example, recall, is “You are speaking of necessity because you are speaking.” And what he says about it makes it clear that this is something pretty close to what we earlier calling “conditional necessity” in the case of Boethius—that is, the necessity of a conditional where, when $\Box(p \rightarrow q)$, we say that if p , then necessarily (that is, conditionally necessarily) q .

This is close to Anselm's picture, but—again—I don't think it's quite right. Notice that nowhere in the passage from *Cur dues homo* does Anselm mention anything about

conditionals. There are no examples of conditionals anywhere in his discussion, for instance.

So what I think he has in mind here is instead the sense in which we earlier said that the past is “necessary,” and for that matter the present is “necessary” too. That is, it’s unavoidable now—it’s too late to do anything about it.

If I am speaking now, then it’s not just the conditional “If I am speaking then I am speaking” that is necessary, but the categorical statement “I am speaking” that is necessary (in this “consequent” or subsequent” sense). It is unavoidable.

This need not involve any kind of causality or compulsion at all, as Anselm himself points out. The fact that I am now speaking doesn’t cause the fact that I am now speaking—it is that fact.

This makes sense out of what he says at the end of the passage in the quotation:

Now wherever there is antecedent [that is, compelled] necessity there is also subsequent [that is, settled] necessity; but it is not the case that where there is subsequent [= settled] necessity there is automatically also antecedent [= compelled] necessity.

Look at his examples. We already know the laws of nature compel the heavens to revolve, and so the fact that the heavens do revolve is antecedently necessary. And, he now says, “wherever there is antecedent necessity there is also subsequent necessity.” Thus (his example),

It is [subsequently] necessary that the heavens revolve, because they [antecedently] revolve.

[This is an example of subsequent necessity’s following from antecedent necessity.]

In other words, the laws of nature make it antecedently necessary that the heavens revolve. And so they do revolve. And given that they do revolve, it’s now unavoidable that they revolve (subsequent necessity).

On the other hand, he goes on:

... it is not similarly true that you are speaking because it is [antecedently] necessary that you speak.

[Here we have an example of antecedent [= compelled] necessity’s not following from subsequent [= settled] necessity.]

It isn’t antecedently necessary. On the contrary, as he says, “not anything is compelling you to speak.”

Let's bring this to a conclusion. The basic idea is that antecedent necessity is the kind that is caused or compelled to occur. Subsequent necessity may or may not be caused or compelled to occur, but in any case that's not what it's about; it's rather about being settled.

Now Anselm argues at some length in the *De Concordia* that subsequent necessity—i.e., unavoidable, settled necessity, whether caused or not—applies not only to the past and the present, BUT ALSO TO THE FUTURE. You might think that admitting this amounts to reintroducing the problem of doing away with our future free actions all over again—it's all settled already. But Anselm argues that it doesn't. Here's the situation:

If it's now a fact that Columbus sailed to America in 1492, then it's subsequently or consequently necessary that he did so; it's now settled. Similarly, if it's a fact that I'm speaking right now, at the present, then that's settled, and it's consequently or subsequently necessary that I am speaking right now.

So too—and here things get dicey—if it's now a fact that I am going to rob a bank tomorrow then, Anselm says, in just the same way it's subsequently or consequently necessary that I will rob a bank tomorrow. And if it's now a fact that I'm not going to rob a bank tomorrow, then it's subsequently or consequently necessary that I won't rob a bank tomorrow.

But it's either now a fact that I will rob a bank tomorrow or it's now a fact that I won't rob a bank tomorrow, one or the other—so that, whichever way it goes, it's now consequently or subsequently necessary. I don't know which way it will turn out, but God does.

Why doesn't that interfere with my free choice? Because, Anselm argues, what God knows is that I will freely rob a bank tomorrow, or that I will freely not rob the bank tomorrow.

A problem with free will would arise only if my future actions were antecedently [= by compulsion] necessary, and they aren't.

Causal Necessity

Let's put aside for now the question whether this will work or not (I don't think it does), and let's also put aside for now the whole notion of subsequent necessity. Instead let's think for a while about the notion of antecedent necessity in terms of causality or compulsion. Anselm seems to agree with Augustine: x is necessary (in that sense) iff something else y causes x.

This is a classical, traditional notion, and there's nothing wrong with it. BUT—it isn't the only notion of causal necessity operative in Anselm.

This does seem to be what he has in mind in *Cur Deus Homo*, II.17 (or at least part of what he has in mind there). But in certain parts of *On Freedom of Choice*, and more clearly in the so called *Lambeth Fragments* (we have no idea when the latter were drafted), Anselm seems to have a different notion of causal necessity (he doesn't use the term

“antecedent” necessity in the latter places). The causal notion we’ve just been looking at (and that we have been calling antecedent necessity) is:

(1) x is necessary iff something else y causes x.

The other notion, in the other places just mentioned, seems to be:

(2) x is necessary iff nothing has the causal power to prevent or undo x.

As Normore points out in his *Cambridge History* article (p. 360), these are not equivalent notions. For example, suppose nothing at all existed, not even God. Then in sense (2) it would be necessary that nothing at all existed. But not in sense (1).

Which of these is Anselm’s “preferred” view? It’s hard to say. But it is clear that, one way or another, Anselm has a causal notion of necessity—and correspondingly of possibility.

Let’s dwell on this for a moment. The main thing about a causal notion of modality is that it’s metaphysical. Whatever the details, I think this much is right—not just historically accurate to the period we’re studying, but also the philosophically correct approach to modality.

We like nowadays to think of possibility and necessity in terms of logic. Something is impossible, for instance, if it implies a contradiction of the syntactical form $p \ \& \ \sim p$. Something is possible if it doesn’t. Something is necessary if its denial implies a contradiction, etc.

But “implies” according to what logic? There are lots of logics. Are we talking about “classical” logic, the logic of countless introductory logic courses? But that’s not the only one. There are lots of other logics: intuitionistic logic, relevance logics of various kinds, positive logic (without negation), Fitch-style logics, “free” logics, paraconsistent logics, etc. In fact, so called “classical” logic isn’t even classical. Aristotle didn’t believe it (he famously said that no proposition can imply its own negation, for instance—which would pretty much rule out *reductio* as a valid argument form, even though he himself cheerfully uses *reductio*), and neither did anyone else—with three small exceptions before the time of Boole and Peano (both of them mathematicians): Philo of Megara, the “Parvipontani” (from the Petit Pont in Paris) in late 12th century, and John Buridan and a few of his students in early-14th century Paris. And virtually everyone else in their times thought they were crazy, so that their views were very soon abandoned.

The tendency nowadays is to dismiss all those “other” logics as “deviant” logics (see Susan Haack’s book *Deviant Logic*), and to say that what we’re talking about is the “real” logic—the logic really matches the way the world works. AND NOW WE’RE TALKING METAPHYSICS, AREN’T WE?

Causal theories of modality have the virtue of facing this fact at the outset. And Anselm has one, although—as we’ve seen—there is some murkiness about the details of what it is. Let’s explore this a bit.

Powers

And let's start with the notion of possibility. Possibility is based on the powers of things. (Power = potency = Latin *potential*, from *potens* = the active participle of *posse*, from which we get "possibility.")

Let's sketch how this goes. (Note: This sketch will look more like the theory suggested in the *Lambeth Fragments* than the theory in *Cur Deus Homo* II.17—see above.)

1. x is possible **for** y = y has the (causal) power to do or bring about x.
2. x is possible (unqualifiedly) = something or other has the power to do or bring about x.

(Note: From this much it follows that if nothing at all existed, nothing would be possible. Compare above on necessity, p. 120.

Also note that in this sense, to say God is omnipotent—that is, that God can do anything possible—is just to say that, whatever it is, if anything at all can do it, God can do it.)

3. x is impossible (not possible) **for** y = y does not have it in its power to do or bring about x.
4. x is impossible (unqualifiedly) = nothing has the power to do or bring about x.

Now something is necessary iff it's impossible that it not be so ($\Box p = \sim \Diamond \sim p$). (This is just a terminological convention.) Hence

5. x is necessary **for** y = y does not have the power to do or bring it about so that x not be so. That is, x does not have the power to prevent or undo x.
6. x is necessary (unqualifiedly) = nothing has the power to prevent or undo x.

Notice what we've just done: we've defined the usual modal notions—possibility, impossibility, necessity—in terms of the powers of things. There's nothing at all here about logical "contradictions."

Back to Boethius

Let's back up and look again at Boethius. When we left him last, we had said that Boethius did two things in the context of divine foreknowledge and future contingents. The first was to draw the distinction between simple/absolute necessity and conditional necessity. Now I want to talk about the second one.

It seems, Boethius suggests, that there's still a problem, even after distinguishing simple or absolute necessity from conditional necessity. Recall the so called "proof" we gave that foreknowledge is incompatible with free will (see the handout, and p. 112 above).

We said that step 2 of that argument was ambiguous, and could be read either in the obviously true but innocuous sense that

$$\Box(Kp \rightarrow p)$$

(innocuous because the argument won't go through on that reading), or in the much stronger and more dangerous sense that

$$Kp \rightarrow \Box p,$$

which we have no reason to believe.

But, Boethius objects in the *Consolation*, perhaps we do have a reason to accept the latter, stronger reading after all, where p is about the future. For it seems that the only things that can be known about the future are necessary truths about it. I can't know, let's say, that you're going to rob a bank tomorrow, and I can't know that you're not, because (let's say) that's something you have free will about. But I can know that either you will or you won't, because that's a necessary truth and not subject to your free will.

So the problem is that it looks as if perhaps the only things that can be known about the future are necessary truths in the sense that is not subject to free will.

The same point can perhaps be put a little more clearly if we remember how Anselm argued: If it's a fact now that I'm freely going to rob a bank tomorrow, then that's what God knows, and if it's a fact now that I'm freely not going to rob a bank tomorrow, then that's what God knows. One or the other of them is a fact now, but Anselm thinks that if it's a fact about my free action tomorrow, then my freedom is not compromised.

But perhaps he's wrong. After all, if it's a fact now that I'm freely going to rob a bank tomorrow, then it's still a fact that I'm going to rob it, and if it's a fact that I'm freely not going to rob it, then it's still a fact that I'm not going to rob it. And just insisting that whichever way it turns out is going to be done freely won't do any good, because it looks as if it's not going to be done freely.

The problem is that, if we're talking about facts of the matter now, then it's settled now. I won't settle it tomorrow when I make my decision; it's already settled today and has been from the very beginning. The fact that is the case now is not just that I'm going to decide tomorrow; no, it's also a fact now what my decision is going to be. Or at least it is if God knows it now. And so tomorrow I will not be able to make the opposite choice, because that would require me to change the past.

If I'm really going to be free tomorrow when I decide, then there can't be anything ontologically about the state of reality today from which it follows what my decision is going to be. If I'm really going to be free tomorrow, there cannot be any "fact of the matter" today—and therefore nothing for God to know today.

This is in effect the problem Boethius raised too almost 700 years before Anselm. In short, all our distinctions between simple/absolute necessity and conditional necessity, or

between antecedent necessity and subsequent necessity, aren't enough to solve the problem.

Here's where Boethius makes his second important move. In *Consolation* v pr. 4, Lady Philosophy (a personification of philosophy, who appears to Boethius while he is in jail awaiting execution) says (p. 110):

The cause of your error lies in your assumption that whatever is known is known by the force and nature of the things that are known; but the opposite is true. Everything which is known is known not according to its own power but rather according to the capacity of the knower.

In other words, the way we know things—and, for that matter, which things we can know—is determined not only by the things themselves, but also by our cognitive powers. And, Lady Philosophy goes on, we should not suppose the faculty of divine cognition is as weak as ours.

We know things, it turns out, she says, through:

1. the senses (which know particulars that are present)
2. imagination (which knows particulars but even when they are absent)
3. reason (which knows all of the above, but also universals).

But God's knowledge, Lady Philosophy says, proceeds not by any of these ways but by means of intelligence or understanding, which grasps the “pure form itself” (i.e., a divine Idea).

Just as imagination can know everything the senses can know but more besides (namely, absent particulars), and just as reason can know everything imagination and the senses can know, but knows more besides (namely, universals), so too God's intelligence or understanding can know everything we can know by reason, but more besides. So from the fact that we cannot know anything about the future that isn't already necessary, it doesn't follow that God can't.

Lady Philosophy goes on to tell us that God's knowledge, which proceeds by intelligence or understanding is—like God himself, with which it is identical—eternal. And what is eternity? Eternity is (Book v, pr. 6, quoted in Williams's *Basic Writings*, at *Monologion*, Chap. 24, p. 35 n. 2):

the whole and perfect possession of illimitable life all at once.

This is a famous definition.

Anselm knew this Boethian definition, and in effect quotes it. See *Monologion*, Chap. 24, pp. 34–35, where Anselm is talking about how it's better to say the supreme being exists always than to say it exists at every time:

... Therefore, if he is said to exist ‘always’, this is best understood as meaning that he exists or lives eternally; in other words, that he enjoys illimitable life as a whole, perfectly, and all at once. For his eternity appears to be an illimitable life existing, as a whole all at once and perfectly.

Now you may well wonder what life is doing in this definition, and that’s a good question. But for now the important thing to note is that the key notion here is not ‘illimitable life’ but ‘all at once’. That is, God is not spread out over time the way we are, with the result that at the present we don’t have the whole of God existing but only a time-slice of God. No, God doesn’t come in time-slices. God exists as a whole all at once. And that is what it is to be eternal. See *Monologion*, Chap. 21. (Eternity, then, is not just omnitemporality.)

Now we’ll talk about Anselm on this in a moment. But for now let’s finish up Boethius’s view, which is the background to Anselm.

Since God is eternal, Boethius says, then, his knowledge—that is, his understanding or intelligence—is eternal too. Hence it does not proceed, as our reasoning does, in terms of past, present and future. For the divine knowledge, there is at it were only a kind of eternal present—all at once. Hence, just as our reason has no problem with knowing present contingencies (i.e., things that occur in the present and that are not settled before they occur), so too God’s knowledge has no problem knowing future contingencies. They are future, and therefore hidden, only from the point of view of reason. For God, they are all present.

No doubt, you’ve heard this line before: the way to solve the problem of divine foreknowledge and human freedom is to move God outside time entirely. Well, here it is, in Boethius. (It’s not the first, but is certainly the most famous presentation of this view.)

In *De Concordia*, Anselm pretty clearly adopts this Boethian line. For example, q. 1, § 4, (p. 365):

... whether we say this according to the unchangeable present of eternity in which nothing is past or future, but all things are at once without any motion [*i.e., change*] ... or according to time

Again, q. 1, § 5 (p. 366):

For because God does not err and sees nothing but truth, whether that truth comes about by freedom or by necessity, something is said to be immutably fixed with regard to him that, with regard to human beings, is subject to change until it happens.

Again (*ibid.*, p. 367):

And in just the same way, something that in eternity cannot be changed is proved, without any inconsistency, to be changeable in time until it exists, thanks to free will.

And there are many other such passages in the *De Concordia* as well.

Note that this notion of God's not being in time is something we've not seen before in Anselm. Despite Anselm's quoting Boethius's definition of eternity in *Monologion*, Chap. 24, we've not seen anything so far that really commits Anselm to saying that God is not in time like anything else. The most we've seen before is that God doesn't change in time the way creatures do. But that's not the same thing.

Back in *Monologion*, Chaps. 20–22, we saw Anselm say that God is always and everywhere, but not that he was outside space and time altogether. In fact, we saw Anselm explain a kind of “inclusive” sense of being “wholly in” a place and time, a sense that would apply to God.

But now, in *De Concordia*, we do clearly get Anselm espousing the Boethian notion of eternity, with its full implications. Is this a change of mind on Anselm's part? That's not clear. It's almost as if, while he quotes the Boethian definition of eternity in *Monologion*, Chap. 24, he doesn't quite realize its full implications (the “all at once” in the definition).

If this does represent a change of mind in Anselm's thinking, it is one of the few points where he does change his mind. For the most part, Anselm shows a remarkable uniformity of thought throughout all his writings.

Now for some evaluation: It's not clear to me whether the Boethian/Anselmian strategy is going to work. There are at least two things wrong with it, it seems to me. **(1)** First, it's not clear God can be omniscient if he's eternal in the Boethian sense. **(2)** And second, even if he can be, it's not clear how this is going to solve the problem of reconciling divine foreknowledge with human freedom.

Let's look at the first problem. The Boethian/Anselmian strategy can be put like this:

You may be familiar with the way W. V. Quine translated tensed sentences into what he called “eternal” sentences, by substituting a “tenseless” verb for the tensed verb of the original, and adding an explicit time-rider if one is needed. For example, “It is now raining,” said at time *t*, is translated into “At time *t*, it rains,” where the verb is taken in a tenseless sense. (So too, Leibniz's strategy.)

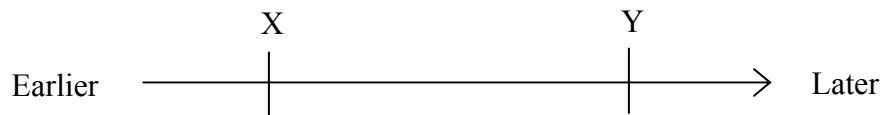
The Boethian/Anselmian strategy, then, amounts to claiming that the truths God knows are all of this tenseless, “eternal” variety. (Non-eternal truths, tensed-truths, can change their truth-value over time, so that if they were what God knows, his knowledge—and so he himself—would change over time. And that would violate divine immutability.)

Now this claim, together with the thesis of divine omniscience (that God knows all truths, everything there is to know), entails that all truths can be translated into eternal-truths in this way, without loss of content.

And that, of course, is purely a question of tense-logic. Like many topics in “fringe”-areas of logic like this, it’s not entirely uncontroversial, but I think there is pretty general agreement that it can’t be done. Consider this:

There are two ways of looking at time:

When we try to visualize time, we usually picture it in spatial terms—for instance, as a line, running from earlier to later. Point X is earlier in time than point Y, for example:



From this point of view then, all temporal events can be arranged on the temporal continuum, and can be related to one another as earlier than, later than, or simultaneous with. Furthermore, those relationships never change. World War I is always earlier than World War II, for instance—from any point on the temporal continuum.

In effect, then, both the statement that WWI will be earlier than WWII (which was a true statement in Anselm’s day, although he of course couldn’t have known that), and the statement that WWI was earlier than WWII (which is a true statement in our own day), can be translated into the tenseless (“eternal”) truth “World War I earlier than World War II.”

Temporal notions like earlier than, later than, simultaneous with, belong to what is sometimes called the “B”-series of temporal notions. The terminology comes from the British philosopher John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart (1866–1925), who distinguished what he called the “A”-series and the “B”-series as two ways of dividing up times, or events in time. The latter, the “B”-series, as we’ve just seen, is the division in terms of earlier, later, simultaneous.

The former, the “A”-series, however, divides events in terms of past, present, and future. And those divisions are constantly changing, depending on where you are in time. What was future is now present, and a moment from now it will be past. (So too for expressions like “tomorrow,” “now,” “last year.”)

The “A”-series captures the notion of the flow of time. The “B”-series, however, presents all of time at once in a way that doesn’t depend on your vantage point from within time.

Now we can ask various questions about time, and we can know various facts about time, from the “A”-series point of view and the “B”-series point of view. The fact that event X comes before event Y, for example, is a “B”-series fact. And, as we’ve just seen, that fact can be expressed tenselessly, in a “eternal” proposition.

So there’s no particularly theoretical difficulty in saying God can know “B”-series facts about time, even if he himself is not in time at all.

But a question like “What time is it?” is an “A”-series question, the answer to which is constantly changing. And it’s not at all clear that all “A”-series questions or statements can be translated without loss of content into “B”-series statements. “It is now time t” for instance, does not amount to “At time t it (tenselessly) is time t”—not even at time t! The latter statement is a mere tautology, whereas the former might actually be used to tell someone what time it is.

Consider another example. Suppose you’re at a bus stop, and wonder whether you’ve missed your bus. You consult a timetable, which tells you that at 2:10, for instance, bus #1 leave for downtown, while at 2:14 but #5 leaves for the west side, and so on. All that’s very good, but—even if all the busses are on schedule—you still don’t know whether you’ve missed your bus! The timetable gives you a series of “B”-series facts, whereas what you want to know is an “A”-series fact.

The upshot is: If God’s knowledge works in terms of eternity, then even if can know some things about time (the “B”-series facts), he can’t be omniscient since he can’t know the “A”-series facts—he doesn’t know what time it is!

The second problem with the Boethian/Anselmian approach is this: Even if God is omniscient, and his knowledge does proceed in terms of eternity, how does this solve the problem? How does this prevent God’s omniscience from interfering with our free will?

Anselm repeatedly says we have these two ways of talking about human action and temporal events in general: from the point of view of eternity and from the point of view of time. From the point of view of eternity it’s settled whether I’m going to rob a bank tomorrow; from the point of view of time, it isn’t (at least not if we want to say it’s a free act).

Which point of view is right? If we say both of them (and Anselm does—see p. 367, quoted above), then we’ve got the awkward view that it’s both settled and not settled whether I’m going to rob a bank tomorrow.

Perhaps, you say, this is one of those perspectival truths Visser and Williams talk about in their *Companion* chapter on truth. After all, there’s nothing wrong with saying something is true from one perspective but false from another perspective. A task may be difficult, for instance, from the point of view of requiring great physical strength, and yet not difficult at all from the point of view of being particularly complicated or requiring any special endurance.

OK, are both points of view legitimate, then? If so, then fine—let’s talk then from the temporal point of view, since it’s legitimate. Is it settled now whether I’m going to rob a bank tomorrow? If so, then that means there’s nothing I can do about it now. (Note all the “A”-series temporal specifications here.) And in fact, there is nothing I was ever able to do about it. And therefore, whichever way it turns out tomorrow, I’m not at the head of the causal chain. Likewise, it doesn’t seem that I have now, ever had, or ever will have any alternative possibilities available to me about robbing a bank tomorrow. In short, there doesn’t seem to be any sense in which I ever was, am now, or ever will be free about robbing that bank tomorrow.

On the other hand, if from the temporal point of view it is not settled now whether I'm going to rob a bank tomorrow, then from the temporal point of view God can't know now which way it's going to turn out (since there's nothing there to be known now). And therefore, from the temporal point of view, God's not omniscient.

So, from the temporal point of view, God's omniscience and foreknowledge do conflict with my future free decisions, don't they? And we just said there is nothing wrong with the temporal point of view. So fine, we really do have our problem then, don't we, and there's nothing wrong with the way we set it up!

It doesn't do any good to insist that there's another point of view from which the problem doesn't arise. That's just an attempt to distract us from the fact that the problem does arise from our (legitimate) point of view.

The only way to avoid this result, it seems to me, is to downplay the legitimacy of either the one point of view or the other, either the temporal perspective or the eternal one. What usually happens is that the talk about the distinction between the temporal and the eternal perspectives ends up downplaying the reality of time. Time is really just an illusion, a distorted perspective. But Anselm doesn't ever suggest that!

The *De Grammatico*

(Distribute handout: "Passages Relevant to Anselm's *De Grammatico*.")

The *De Grammatico* is early. It's in fact the earliest more or less datable work we have from Anselm, coming from 1060–63, before he had even been named Prior—much less Abbot—of the Abbey of Bec. (Recall, Anselm became a monk at Bec in 1060, and was named Prior in 1063.) It is even earlier than the various prayers and meditations that come before the *Monologion*.

As you'll recall, Anselm mentions this dialogue in his Preface to *On Truth* (p. 115). Like the "Three Philosophical Dialogues" (*On Truth*, *On Freedom of Choice*, *On the Fall of the Devil*), the *De Grammatico* is a dialogue between a Teacher and a Student. But unlike those other dialogues—and in fact unlike everything else Anselm wrote, with the exception of the so called *Lambeth Fragments* (= *Philosophical Fragments*, or *Unfinished Work*), which we can't date at all, it has nothing whatever to do with theological topics. It is a pure piece of semantics and philosophy of language.

The work has been translated and studied extensively by Desmond Paul Henry, the translator of the version found in the volume *Anselm of Canterbury: Major Works* (edited by Brian Davies and G. R. Evans), which I used to use for this course. But Henry also

published essentially the same translation as early as 1964 in *The De Grammatico of St. Anselm: The Theory of Paronymy*, which includes an ample theoretical discussion of what's going on in the work. In 1967, he published *The Logic of St. Anselm*, which is in effect more about the *De Grammatico*. In 1974, he did it again in *Commentary on De Grammatico: The Historical-Logical Dimensions of a Dialogue of St. Anselm's*. (Bibliographical details on all these works may be found on the handout on "Bibliography" I gave you at the beginning of this course. There are also two papers by Henry on the *De Grammatico* on E-Reserves: "Saint Anselm's *De 'Grammatico'*," and "Saint Anselm's Nonsense." And there are other places where he treats the work too.

Be warned: Although Henry says a lot of helpful things about this dialogue, he also has some pretty non-standard—and, in my view, weird—views about medieval logic, semantics and philosophy of language, and about logic, semantics and philosophy of language generally (whether medieval or otherwise). He seems to have taken it as his mission in life to resurrect not only the *De Grammatico* but also the logical theories and notation of the twentieth-century Polish logician Stanisław Leśniewski. Leśniewski was a brilliant logician who did some very interesting work—particularly on the theory known as "mereology" (the theory of "parts"—part/whole theory—but the benefits of imposing his views and his very idiosyncratic notation on Anselm seem to me minimal.

Henry's translation of the *De Grammatico* is divided into numbered sections, after the fashion of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, which was all the rage when Henry started working on Anselm. So understand: The section numbers are not Anselm's, but Henry's. Nevertheless, they are handy. I will be using my own translations of passages from the *De Grammatico* throughout our discussion, but I will also refer to Henry's section numbers, so you should have no trouble locating the corresponding passages in Henry's translation.

The *De Grammatico* is particularly interesting to me, insofar as it represents an early—but already quite sophisticated—stage in what later on in the Middle Ages became known as the theory of connotation—or connotative names. This is a topic on which I at one time did a lot of work. But the real heyday of medieval connotation-theory came only much later than Anselm, in the fourteenth century with people like William of Ockham (in London) and John Buridan (in Paris).

I won't of course be directly discussing those people, since that's a different course, but I will occasionally remark on how things Anselm says will be developed later on in those later people.

It is remarkable to me—and something of a great mystery—that although I know of no one in the later heyday of medieval connotation-theory who actually cites Anselm's *De Grammatico* or shows any real familiarity with it (it seems to have had very little circulation), the views in it seem to have been influential. I don't know how to explain this odd fact.

The Theory of Paronymy

But before we start talking about the *De Grammatico* directly, I first want to look at some background: the theory of “paronyms” or “paronymous names” in Aristotle and Augustine (354–430).

What are paronyms? Well, the classic text on this is found at the beginning of Aristotle’s *Categories* 1, 1^a12–15 (Passage (1) on your handout—Anselm had this text in Boethius’s translation):

Whatever get from something the names by which they are called, but differ in ending, are called “paronyms.” For example, a grammarian [is so called] from grammar, and a brave [person is so called] from bravery.

Notice: Aristotle himself seems to be talking about the things—the grammarian, not the word ‘grammarian’ but the person. He says “whatever get from something the names by which they are called.” Still, the story I’m about to tell is mainly about names = nouns and adjectives, and it’s easy to see how that would be a natural transition to make. From now on, when I talk about “paronyms,” I’ll mean “paronymous names.”

In any case, the quotation I just read you is pretty much all Aristotle has to say on the topic.

From Aristotle’s remark, and particularly from his examples, you might get the idea that a theory of paronymous names [= nouns and adjectives] would be simply a theory of concrete and abstract names.

If we follow this impression, and insist on the syntactic criterion Aristotle mentions—that is, that paronymous names differ only with respect to their endings—then what we will end up with is indeed probably only a theory of concrete and abstract names, and a pretty inadequate and cramped one at that. But if we relax that syntactical stricture and look at what is semantically interesting about paronymous names, we will find something of much more general interest.

Consider, for instance, the case of ‘just’ and ‘justice’ (not one of Aristotle’s examples). When we call something just, we do so by making a kind of “oblique reference,” as it were, to something else—to the justice it exemplifies or has, in virtue of which we call it just.

Similarly, when we call someone brave (this time one of Aristotle’s own examples), we do so with one eye, so to speak, on something else—on the bravery that person displays or possesses, in virtue of which we call him or her brave.

On the other hand, when we call a certain virtue justice or bravery, we do not make this kind of oblique reference to something else. The justice or the bravery is all that is involved. The “brave” is a person who has bravery, but bravery itself is just bravery.

What is semantically interesting about paronymous names, therefore, is this feature I have just called “oblique reference.” This is not yet a technical expression. I simply use it

as motivation for the points I'll be making. Our task will be to specify as precisely as we can just what is going on there.

So considered, the theory of paronymy is just a special case of the theory of absolute and connotative terms that was developed to a very high degree in the fourteenth century, particularly by Ockham and Buridan. The theory of connotation turns out to be exactly the theory of this kind of "oblique reference," in contexts that include but go beyond paronyms in the sense Aristotle described.

So my interest here is not so much in the theory of paronymy narrowly taken as it is in what might be called "early connotation theory," although the term 'connotation' was not used until later. I will focus on two authors: **(1)** on St. Augustine, who does not so far as I know discuss paronymy anywhere directly, and certainly does not in the passages I will be considering, but who does have some things of great interest to say that bear on connotation-theory more generally; and **(2)** on Anselm, who has a great deal to say in the *De Grammatico* about a particular case of paronymy, which will also bear on later connotation-theory more generally. (But I'll also want to talk about another passage from Anselm, one from his *On the Fall of the Devil*.)

Augustine

Let us look first then at Augustine. And let us begin by looking at a passage that concerns, of all things, the question how to define a human being.

The passage is from Augustine's *On the Customs of the Catholic Church* (Passage (2) on your handout), nowadays perhaps not among Augustine's most widely read works.

Augustine is discussing what the chief good is for human beings, and along the way he decides that in answering this question it would help to figure out just what a human being is in the first place.

Augustine recognizes that somehow you need both soul and body to have a fully constituted human being. We do not, he says, properly call a corpse a human being, and neither do we properly call a disembodied ghost a human being. Somehow you need both body and soul in order to have a human being.

But, given that you need both in order to have a human being, what more can we say? Does it follow that the human being somehow is both—that he is a composite of body and soul in some way, perhaps after the Aristotelian fashion in which the soul is the substantial form of the body?

Well, no, not necessarily. Augustine considers three possible stories one might tell here. In effect, he is asking "What kind of word is 'man' (= 'human being', '*homo*')?"

- (1)** Is it a "pair"-word? For example, we speak of a "team" of horses. Neither horse by itself is the team, but only the pair of them when they are somehow hitched together.

Is the word ‘man’ then like that, so that neither the body nor the soul is properly the man, but only the pair of them when they are somehow “hitched together”? This is more or less the Aristotelian theory, in a suitably loose sense: Body and soul are ingredients or parts of the composite whole we call a man, and the term we predicate of the whole is not truly predicable of either of its parts. Is the word ‘man’ then like this?

(Augustine also mentions the word ‘centaur’ as being another example of this kind of word. But that seems to be based on the odd view that a centaur is not half horse and half man, as is usually thought, but somehow a combination of a complete horse and a complete man. See n. 2 on your handout. It’s probably best to disregard the example.)

- (2) Or is the word ‘man’ more like the word ‘lantern’ (*lucerna*)? Two things are required in order to make a lantern. First of all, you need the container or case, the material artifact made out of metal and glass, let’s say. But if that case did not support a flame, so that it is somehow in the service of the flame, then what you have is not a lantern, but a piece of hardware that is at most “potentially” a lantern, as Aristotle might have put it. Conversely, if you have a flame without the case, then you don’t have a lantern either; you have a fire on your hands!

Both case and flame are required in order to have a fully functioning lantern. Nevertheless, when you do have a lantern, it is not the pair consisting of the case and the flame that is the lantern. It is only the case that is properly speaking the lantern, although it is called a lantern only with a kind of “oblique reference” (and that is the notion we want to investigate) to the flame it supports.

The example is perhaps a bit strained, but its application to Augustine’s main question is clear. Is the word ‘man’ like the word ‘lantern’? That is, is only the material casing—the body—properly speaking the man, even though it is called a man only when it contains and supports a soul, so that it is the body that we call the man, but only with an “oblique reference” to the soul? (Otherwise, it’s just a corpse.)

- (3) Or finally, is the word ‘man’ more like the word ‘rider’? (That is, ‘*eques*’ = ‘horseman’. I don’t want to translate this word as ‘horseman’, since in English that word has ‘man’ built into it, and so perhaps skews the point Augustine is making. Note that ‘*eques*’ is etymologically related to ‘*equus*’ = ‘horse’, so that the word means someone who rides horses—not someone who, say, rides a bicycle or is a passenger in a boat. You don’t have a rider unless you have a man who rides horses. You need both the man and the horse. Yet the rider is not the pair man-and-horse, somehow hitched together. And the rider is certainly not the horse considered as supporting and at the service of the man. Rather it is only the man who is properly speaking the rider, although we only call him a “rider” with a kind of “oblique reference” to the horse, which he governs and rules.)

Is the word ‘man’ then like this? Is it really only the soul that is the man, even though it is only called a man insofar as it is supported by a body, which it governs and rules? (The notion of “governing” and “ruling” is a characteristic Augustinian phrase that often occurs when he is describing the proper relation of the soul to the body. But there is no need to go into that here.)

There is another passage from Augustine, this time from his *On the City of God* (Passage (3) on your handout), where he lists the same three alternatives (in reverse order) and attributes them to the Roman pagan Eclectic philosopher Varro (116–27 BCE), whom elsewhere he calls “most learned” (*De civitate dei* III.4.2). And he says that Varro chose the first alternative (the third in the ordering of Passage (3)): that ‘man’ is a pair-word. Hence, according to Varro, the highest good for man is to lead a “mixed” life, that is, a mixture of the contemplative and the active life, so that the goods of both soul and body, and thus of the whole man, will be accommodated.

Much later in *On the City of God* (XIX.4.132–80—I’ve not quoted this in your handout because it’s a long passage), Augustine says he thinks Varro treated the whole question superficially, because he tried to find the highest good of man in this life rather than in the next. And indeed, later in *On the Customs of the Catholic Church* Augustine makes it quite clear that he himself accepts the third of the alternatives he lists there, that it is the soul that is the man, but it is called a “soul” only insofar as it governs and rules a body. He says (I.27.52):

Therefore man, as he appears to man, is a rational, mortal and earthly soul using a body.

(Text (7) on your handout. There are some textual problems here—an “earthly soul”? “man as he appears to man”? But I have translated as best I could.)

Augustine therefore accepts a basically Platonic picture of body and soul. For him they are like two distinct substances, not linked as matter and form, as they are for Aristotle, but by a relation of “governing and ruling,” as the rider dominates his horse or—to use other familiar similes from the Platonic tradition—as the ruler is in his city or as the captain is in his ship. And if you ask what, properly speaking, is the man, Augustine will answer that it is the soul, but only when it is doing its job of governing and ruling the body.

Semantical Implications

Now you may think it is straining things a little to find much of logical or semantical importance in these passages. But if you do, you are wrong.

Although the technical machinery is not there, Augustine is in effect claiming here that the term ‘man’ is what later authors will call a “connotative” term, that it names or is truly predicable of souls, but only by making in addition a kind of “oblique reference” to —“connoting,” as they will later say—the bodies those souls rule.

On the second theory Augustine considers (and rejects), the theory that the term ‘man’ is like the term ‘lantern’, ‘man’ is likewise a connotative term. But this time the semantic situation is just the reverse. This time the term names bodies, but only by making in addition an “oblique reference” to—“connoting”—the souls those bodies support and serve.

On the other hand, on the first theory Augustine considers (and likewise rejects), the theory that ‘man’ is a pair-word like ‘team’ or ‘centaur’, ‘man’ is not a connotative term at all, but what later authors will call an “absolute” term. It names composite wholes consisting of bodies and souls put together, but it does not do so by making any “oblique reference” to—“connoting”—either the body or the soul, or for that matter anything else.

It is perhaps hard to see what is different in this case, to see why on this first theory the term ‘man’ does not make an “oblique reference” to both bodies and souls. The problem here is that we do not yet have any general answer to the question: How do we distinguish absolute from connotative names? How do we know when we have what I have been calling “oblique reference”? That is a very difficult and delicate matter even for the later authors like Ockham, who was pretty technically-minded, so that we should hardly expect a precise answer from Augustine—who was after all an extraordinarily deep and profound thinker, but scarcely a technician.

Nevertheless, I think I can explicate the difference in a preliminary, rather non-technical, but still revealing, way by appealing to the notion of what I shall call “conditional naming.” (Do not expect too much from this theory of “conditional naming.” I am making it up solely for the purpose of illustrating a point.)

Consider any name that names—that is, is truly predicable of—an object x. Now some names name an object x only under the condition that x satisfy certain requirements. For instance, the name (or description) ‘the President of the United States’ names a certain individual person—as I’m speaking, Barack Obama. But it only names him under the condition that he occupies the office of President. After he leaves office, that same term will no longer name him because he will no longer satisfy the condition.

On the other hand, other names name objects without any condition at all—or, if you will, they name those objects only under the condition that those objects exist, but under no further condition. For example, the name ‘Barack Obama’ names a certain individual, and will continue to name that same individual—that is, to be truly predicable of him—provided only that he continue to exist, and (depending on your theory of naming) perhaps even after that. (For present purposes, we will ignore the possibility that he might change his name. That is, the “conditions” we are concerned with here pertain only to the situation in the world; we hold the language—the assigning of terms—fixed.)

Now a term that names objects only under the one condition that those objects exist will be called an “absolute” term. A term that names objects only under the condition that those objects exist and also satisfy some further requirement will be called “connotative.”

Once again, this terminology is not in Augustine, or even in Anselm, but it will prove convenient.

What makes this distinction so hard to pin down precisely is that some terms perhaps name objects under some further condition, where that further condition is nevertheless automatically or necessarily satisfied, given that the objects exist at all. That doesn't necessarily mean the further condition is not there, or that it isn't really a further condition. (So called "natural kind" terms may be like this, if natural kinds are such that a thing of one natural kind cannot change into a thing of another natural kind without losing its identity and becoming a different individual altogether.)

In effect, then, the difference between absolute and connotative terms—in effect, two kinds of naming—and the difficulty in distinguishing them, is a little like the situation with Kant's distinction between categorical and hypothetical imperatives. A categorical imperative is a pure imperative, with no condition attached to it explicitly or even implicitly. ("Act only in such a way that the maxim of your action can be universally applied.") A hypothetical imperative, however, does have some condition attached to it, even if the condition is only implicit. For example, the sign on the door: "Push." Understand the implicit condition "if you want the door to open."

A hypothetical imperative is still hypothetical even if the condition, implicit or explicit, is one that is automatically and necessarily satisfied, given the kinds of beings we are. For example, various commands based on an understanding of human nature. "If you want to be happy—and of course we all do, since that is part of human nature, at least on certain theories—then cultivate a circle of friends." Such hypothetical imperatives with guaranteed conditions Kant calls "precepts of prudence."

These broadly "Kantian" considerations will perhaps suffice to give you a kind of rough and ready sense of the distinction between absolute and connotative terms. The exact specification of that distinction need not concern us here. For now, let's just see how the distinction can be applied to the texts we have been considering from Augustine.

On the second and third theories Augustine considers in Passage (2)—the "lantern"-theory and the "rider"-theory—it is clear that we are treating 'man' as a connotative term in the sense just described. On the second theory, the term names bodies, but does so only under the condition that those bodies support and serve souls. If they do not do that, as for instance they will no longer do after the departure of the soul at death, then the term 'man' no longer names—can no longer be truly predicated of—those bodies, even though those bodies continue to exist and to retain their identity, but now as corpses.

On the third theory Augustine considers, the one he ACCEPTS, the term 'man' names souls, but only under the condition that those souls inhabit and rule a body. If they do not do that, as for instance they will no longer do after death, then the term 'man' no longer names—can no longer be truly predicated of—those souls, even though the souls continue to exist and to retain their identity as disembodied spirits. They are souls, and in fact the same souls they were all along, but they are no longer human beings.

On the first theory, however, the pair-word theory, things are different. There the term 'man' names a whole composed of body and soul. It does not name either the body or the soul individually—either when they are separated from one another or when they are together—any more than the word 'man' names my foot, whether severed or attached.

Now the term ‘man’ on this first theory names the whole composite of body and soul, provided only that that whole exists. If the composite is broken up, so that body and soul are separated, then the whole no longer exists, so that there is no longer anything for the term to name. The term ‘man’, therefore, names the composite objects it does, on this theory, only under the condition that those composites exist. There is no further condition, implicit or explicit. Hence the term is not connotative, but “absolute.”

Of course, you might insist that there is an implicit further condition after all, one that is automatically and necessarily satisfied—namely the condition that those composites consist of body and soul, or some other such condition. But this just brings us back to the point that an exact and technical distinction between absolute and connotative terms is a complicated and delicate matter. We’re trying to motivate the distinction here, not to come up with a rule of thumb or infallible decision procedure for telling which is which.

This then is our first pass at the distinction between absolute and connotative terms. It’s a good start, but clearly much remains to be done.

Anselm

Now let’s turn to Anselm. There are two texts from Anselm I want to consider. The first does not deal with paronymous terms especially, but more generally with “connotative” terms in the sense we have just discussed. The second text however, the *De Grammatico*, does deal specifically with paronymy.

Ontological Implications

The first text is from Anselm’s dialogue *On the Fall of the Devil*, Ch. 11. Here it is (*Basic Writings*, pp. 186–87, although I am here using my own translation—see Passage (8) on your handout):

You see, the form of an expression often doesn’t match the way things are in reality. For example, ‘to fear’ is active according to the form [it’s an active infinitive] of the word even though fearing is passive in reality. And in the same way, blindness is something according to the form of the expression, even though it is not something in reality. For we say that someone has blindness and that there is blindness in him in just the way that we say someone has vision and that there is vision in him, even though blindness is not something, but instead not-something, and to have blindness is not to have something but rather to lack that which is something. After all, blindness is nothing other than non-vision or the absence of vision where there ought to be vision; and non-vision or the absence of vision is not something in cases where there ought to be vision any more than it is in cases where there ought not be vision. Therefore, blindness is not something in the eye, just because there ought to be vision in the eye, any more than non-vision or the absence of vision is something

in a stone, where there ought not to be vision. And there are many other similar cases in which things that are not something are called something according to the form of the expression, in that we speak of them as we speak of things that really exist.

Now let's discuss it. In the dialogue as a whole, Anselm is concerned among other things with the problem of evil, and he is at pains to maintain the basic Augustinian line that evil is not a thing, not a reality in its own right. Nevertheless, Anselm wants to maintain also that the word 'evil' has a legitimate use (as Augustine would of course also say), and Anselm wonders how that can be.

His analogy with the term 'blindness' is instructive. When we say of someone that vision is in him or there is vision in him, or simply that he has vision, the structure of our sentence is, as it were, a kind of "picture" of what it is that makes that sentence true. That is, just as we use the word 'vision' and the word 'him' and the linking expression 'is in', so too, on the side of reality, we have the real property vision, a real entity in the ontology, and we also have the real person, and the former really inheres in or belongs to the other.

But when we say of someone that blindness is in him or there is blindness in him or that he has blindness, our sentence—even though it may well be true—is not in this same kind of way a picture of what makes it true. What makes it true is not that there is some mysterious property blindness that really inheres in that person, but rather that the same property we dealt with before—namely, vision—is not in that person.

In effect then, for Anselm the term 'blindness' is a connotative term (although he doesn't use that expression). It does not name (cannot be truly predicated of) anything at all, since blindness is not an entity in its own right. But we can truly say that blindness is in a person—not by referring to blindness, since there isn't any such thing, but by making a kind of "oblique reference" to the vision that is not there.

For Anselm then, despite its apparent simplicity, the term 'blindness' is really what logicians sometimes call an "incomplete symbol." The expression 'Blindness is in x' is really just a shorthand or abbreviated way of saying that vision is not in x. (Or actually, that vision is not in x and ought to be in x, as Anselm makes clear in the passage just quoted. But I am not concerned with the "ought"-claim here.) The latter expression, 'Vision is not in x', unlike the former, does provide an accurate picture of what it is that makes it true. We have vision, which really is something (although not in x), and we have x, which is also really something, and we have the ontological relation of "being in," which really does not hold in this case.

The details don't need to detain us. But the moral of the story is already a rich and complex one. First of all, it means that not all the terms we can use in true affirmative statements name things. That is, our terminology is not a reliable guide to ontology.

In effect, we already knew this moral from what we saw in Augustine. If you want an inventory of the entities in the world, you would surely list bodies and souls, but you

would not in addition list men separately. Men just are souls, if we follow Augustine; they are souls that satisfy certain conditions.

Absolute terms, then, are the ones that are linked to an inventory of the world.

Connotative terms add nothing new to the ontology.

This suggests that connotative terms are in principle eliminable from our vocabulary, as the term 'blindness' can be dispensed with in Anselm, and as the term 'man' in Augustine could always be replaced by its definition: "a rational, mortal and earthly soul using a body"—in which all the terms are absolute (or, if they are not, can be replaced in turn by their definitions until we ultimately come to absolute terms). This will be an important feature of fourteenth-century connotation-theory.

A second and related moral to Anselm's story is then that connotation-theory may be used as a vehicle for reducing the number of entities in one's ontology. Thus, just as Anselm observes that we do not need to allow blindnesses (or evils) in our ontology, so too it may turn out that we do not need lots of other things for which we have putative names. They can be parsed away, as Anselm did to blindness (and to evil). This is a program the fourteenth-century connotation-theorists will adopt with a vengeance.

Anselm's Semantics of Paronymy

Let us turn now to the second Anselmian text I want to consider, the *De Grammatico*, and with it from blindness to literacy.

The topic that sets the stage for Anselm's dialogue concerns the Latin term 'grammaticus', which means "grammatical" or even "grammarian." Nevertheless, Desmond Paul Henry suggests that, in order to catch the nuances of the term in the dialogue—and the nuances are quite important here—it is perhaps best to translate 'grammaticus' as "literate," and to allow it to be used nominally, so that we can call someone A literate (note the article), just we might call someone AN illiterate, without requiring any further noun. I think Henry's suggestion is a good one, and we'll follow it.

In any case, the choice of the term 'grammaticus' as the vehicle for the dialogue is no accident. First of all, it is a stock example of a paronymous term. Aristotle, for example, in Passage (1) on your handout, says that a grammarian is so called from grammar—or, as we should now say, the literate from literacy.

But second, and of special importance given that 'grammaticus' was taken as paradigmatic of paronymy, is the fact that there seems to be some disagreement among the traditional authorities over just what the term 'grammaticus' signifies. On the one hand, in Chap. 4 of the *Categories*, where Aristotle is giving examples of the various categories, he lists 'γραμματικὸν' for the category of quality (*Categories* 4, 1^b25–29—Passage (9) on your handout):

Each of what are said without any composition either signifies substance, or quantity, or quality, or relation, or where, or when, or situation, or having, or acting or being acted on. [That's just a list of the ten

categories.] Substance is, to give an example, like a man, a horse;
quantity, like two cubits, three cubits; quality, like white, γραμματικὸν ...

So ‘*grammaticus*’ (switching now from Greek back to Latin) signifies a quality, presumably grammar or literacy, considered as a quality in the soul.

On the other hand Priscian, the famous Latin grammarian (c. 500 CE), says this about adjectives (Priscian, *Institutionum grammaticarum* II.58.20.24—the Latin text may also be found in Henry, *Commentary on De Grammatico*, p. 213) (Passage (10) on your handout):

Adjectives are so called because they are usually adjoined to other appellatives [*i.e.*, common names] that signify a substance, or to proper names as well, in order to make manifest their qualities or quantities, which can grow or diminish without the destruction of the substance. For example, ‘good animal’, ‘big man’, ‘wise *grammaticus*’, ‘great Homer’.

Here the term ‘*grammaticus*’—by coincidence one of the terms Aristotle picked as signifying a quality—is used by Priscian as one of those “appellative” terms, *i.e.* terms “naturally common to many,” as Priscian says elsewhere in the same text (*ibid.* II.58.14.15—Passage (11) on your handout), to which adjectives are attached and which signify substances. Hence according to Aristotle ‘*grammaticus*’ signifies a quality, but according to Priscian a substance. Which is it? That is the stage on which the dialogue takes place, although the lessons of the dialogue apply to other terms besides ‘*grammaticus*’.

Now I am not certain that Anselm actually knew the text of Priscian; I know of no decisive evidence that he did. But he certainly knew this issue of the conflict of authorities, since it’s exactly the topic of the dialogue. I suspect he got it from other authors of the day. Recall that Lanfranc had been teaching grammar and logic, in addition to theology, at the Abbey of Bec

Now, as you might expect, the solution to this apparent conflict is going to have to do justice to both our authorities, both to Aristotle and to Priscian. That is, we are going to have to find a way in which ‘*grammaticus*’ and similar terms can be said to signify both a substance and a quality. And Anselm does this, in good Scholastic fashion, by making a distinction. He distinguishes two kinds of signification, which he calls signification *per se* (= “through itself”) and signification *per aliud* (= “through something else”).

Signification *per aliud* is linked with what Anselm calls “appellation,” although not every case of appellation is a case of signification *per aliud*. We must therefore look at appellation.

Appellation is what appellative terms do. And an appellative term is, according to Priscian, one that is “common to many” (Passage (11) on your handout—I just mentioned it a moment ago):

This is the difference between a proper and an appellative [name], that an appellative is naturally common to many.

Now the only plausible way a term can be “common to many” is by being truly predicable of many. (We’re not talking here about being “common to many” in the way a universal is common to many.) Hence common nouns and adjectives are said to “appellate” the several things they are truly predicable of. Appellation is therefore what I earlier called “naming.” (Strictly speaking, we need to be careful of our terminology here. The noun ‘appellation’ seems to be used sometimes in cases where a name names only one thing, even though the phrase ‘appellative name’ seems to be reserved for common nouns and adjectives.)

According to Anselm, the term ‘*grammaticus*’ (= “literate”) appellates human beings—but only literate ones—at the same time it per se signifies the literacy those human beings possess. Like ‘brave’ and ‘bravery’ in the passage from Aristotle that started this discussion. (See Passage (4), 2nd paragraph—the “Teacher” is speaking):

But ‘*grammaticus*’ (= ‘literate’) does not signify man and grammar as one. Rather it signifies grammar per se and man per aliud. The name [‘*grammaticus*’], even though it is appellative of man, nevertheless cannot properly be called significative of him; and although it is significative of grammar, nevertheless it is not appellative of it. I am now calling an “appellative name” of any thing [that] by which the thing itself is appellated [= called] in common usage. For [there is] no common usage by which it is said that grammar is *grammaticus* (= literate), or a *grammaticus* (= literate) is grammar. Rather, a man is *grammaticus* (= literate), and a *grammaticus* (= literate) a man.

The concrete term ‘*grammaticus*’ (= ‘literate’) therefore names or appellates human beings, but only under the condition that they possess literacy. It is therefore what will later be called a “connotative” term. It names or appellates men, but makes an “oblique reference” to literacy, an oblique reference that Anselm calls signification per se. (By calling it “per se” he indicates that he doesn’t think there’s anything “oblique” about it; it’s the main kind of signification. We’ll see why a little later.) Similarly, the concrete term ‘white’ names or appellates white things, but per se signifies whiteness. (Passage (6) We’ll look at the passage more in a moment.) (Note that in Latin the words for “white” and “whiteness” are quite distinct but related words. In Latin you would never say that white is a color; you would say that whiteness is a color.)

On the other hand, the corresponding abstract names ‘*grammatica*’ (= literacy, grammar) and ‘whiteness’ appellate or name literacy and whiteness, respectively, but also signify them per se. In these cases, then, what the names appellate and what they signify per se are the same. The things the names name they name provided only that the things exist, and under no further condition. The names are therefore what will later be called “absolute” names.

For absolute names, therefore, appellation and per se signification coincide. For connotative names, appellation and per se signification do not coincide, and in that case what the names appellate they are also said to signify per aliud. To put it in a formula, for Anselm signification per aliud is the APPELLATION of what will later be called connotative names. (That's what I meant earlier when I said that signification per aliud is linked with appellation, but not the same as it.)

Now if you concentrate on the examples ('grammaticus', 'white') we have looked at so far, you might suppose that in general concrete names are connotative while their corresponding abstract forms are going to be absolute. But we already know that can't be right. We have seen that for Anselm the abstract name 'blindness' is not absolute but connotative.

There are also cases in which this neat division breaks down the other way too, where we have concrete names that are absolute. For example, Anselm tells us that the concrete name 'man' both appellates and signifies—that is, per se signifies—a substance, the actual man. It is therefore an absolute name and not a connotative one.

It "signifies per se and as one the [things] of which the whole man consists" (from the beginning of first paragraph of Passage (4)).

Note that this means that Anselm disagrees with Augustine, for whom 'man' is in effect a connotative name. (For Anselm, it is absolute.) Note also that the concrete name 'man' is absolute for Anselm even though the word does have a corresponding abstract form, 'humanity', and did in the Latin of Anselm's day too.

We may parse this fact as follows: The things named by the name 'man' will indeed automatically possess humanity provided only that they exist, since humanity is essential to them. But the condition that they possess humanity is not explicitly or implicitly a condition built into the name 'man' itself. Thus the name 'man' names what it does unconditionally. We now want to try to see why.

Signification *per se* and Signification *per aliud*

Let us now look more closely at the notions of signification *per se* and signification *per aliud*. They are both said to be kinds of signification. And so now we need to look at the medieval notion of signification.

The Latin verb 'significare', and its corresponding noun 'significatio', are frequently translated by "to mean" or "meaning." I think this should be avoided in almost all technical contexts. The term 'meaning' is a notorious one in modern philosophical vocabulary. It suggests a connection perhaps with the "ordinary language" philosophers' doctrine that "the meaning is the use," or with various Montague-grammar versions of meaning, or Fregean "senses," or Quinean "stimulus-response meaning," or even the notion of lexical meaning in the sense of what you look up in a dictionary. Any one of these notions of meaning may be quite respectable in its own right, but there are so many of them. And besides, none of them is very much like what the mediaevals called significatio or "signification."

There was a perfectly clear notion in the Middle Ages of what signification is. Authors tell us quite explicitly. We don't gain anything by translating that quite clear notion into the obscure, or at least controversial, modern notion of "meaning."

Well, what was this mediaeval notion of signification that I said was so clear?

There was a great disagreement in the Middle Ages about what it is that linguistic units signify, but there was universal agreement over the defining criterion, and that is what we are interested in now.

The criterion comes from Aristotle's *On Interpretation* 3, 16b19–21. Here is my translation, directly from Aristotle's Greek (see n. 16 to Passage (6) on the handout):

Therefore, verbs spoken by themselves are names, and signify something.
For the speaker halts his thinking and the listener pauses.

But of course the Middle Ages, after the very beginning, didn't read Greek. They read their Aristotle in Latin, and in particular they read the *De interpretatione* in Boethius's Latin translation. In the passage just quoted, Aristotle is talking about verbs. And he says that verbs, like nouns, are names. That is, they signify something. And why does he say that? Well, here is his reason, in Boethius's translation (n. 16 to Passage (6) again):

Indeed verbs, when uttered by themselves, are names and signify something. For he who says [a verb] establishes an understanding, and he who hears it rests.

The part about the hearer's "resting" is rather obscure. Presumably it means roughly that the hearer's mind stops and fixes on something when he hears a verb. But in any case, that's not the important part of the passage. The important part is the phrase 'establishes an understanding'. Someone who utters a verb establishes an understanding.

Thus:

To signify $x =_{df.}$ to establish an understanding of x .

'Understanding' (= '*intellectus*') in this context does not necessarily imply any kind of theoretical knowledge; to "understand" x , in the sense relevant here, is simply to have a concept of x . In the end, therefore, the general idea is that a thing signifies what it makes us think of.

(Presumably this isn't supposed to be construed so loosely that just any old random "association of ideas" or "that reminds me" kind of thinking will do. We want something more rule-governed than that. But we don't have to worry about the complications now.)

So, both signification per se and signification per aliud are kinds of signification and make us think of things. How do they work, and what is the difference?

We will begin by looking first at signification *per se*, or simply “signification.” (Anselm sometimes drops the ‘*per se*’ where it can be taken for granted.) Consider the following extract (from near the end of Passage (6)):

For since ^(a) the name ‘white’ does not signify anything else than does the expression ‘having whiteness’ [NB: this is not the *gerund*, so that it would mean “to have whiteness,” but the *participle*, so that something that has whiteness can be described as “having whiteness”], [therefore] ^(b) just as the expression [i.e., ‘having whiteness’] by itself (*per se*) establishes an understanding of whiteness for me, and ^(c) not of the thing that has whiteness, so does the name [i.e., ‘white’].

I want to extract three claims (marked by superscripts) from this text: **(a)** The name ‘white’ signifies the same as does the expression ‘having whiteness’. Moreover, just as the latter expression **(b)** “establishes an understanding” in me of whiteness, but **(c)** not of the thing that has the whiteness, so too does the simple name ‘white’.

This is a rich passage. In claim **(b)**, Anselm says that what the name ‘white’ makes me think of, and so signifies, is just whiteness. But that is true of the abstract name ‘whiteness’ too. So why does Anselm say ‘white’ signifies the same as does the expression ‘having whiteness’—claim **(a)**? Why does he not simply say it signifies the same as the name ‘whiteness’ does all by itself?

Well, as far as what the name signifies is concerned, both claims are true. I think what Anselm has in mind is not just the view that ‘white’ signifies the same things as ‘having whiteness’ does, but that the former is somehow just a shorthand abbreviation of the latter. There is some further evidence for this in an argument we will look at in a moment.

If this is right, it is important. For in later connotation-theory, a connotative name was said to have only “nominal” definitions (plural—it can have more than one), whereas an absolute name did not but instead had something called a “real” definition. (The exact specification of this difference is a complicated matter we can avoid here.)

Now ‘having whiteness’ will later be taken as a nominal definition of the connotative name ‘white’. So if connotative names are regarded as simply shorthand abbreviations for their nominal definitions (plural again), all those nominal definitions must somehow amount to the same thing—they must in effect be synonymous. Whenever I use a connotative name, then, I am in effect using an abbreviation for all those synonymous nominal definitions, so that the connotative term signifies—I am made to think of—whatever those synonymous definitions signify.

Now think: What does a complex expression signify? It’s reasonable to say that a complex expression signifies the sum total of what its constituent parts signify. After all, the signification of an expression is just what it makes you think of when you hear it. So a word like ‘man’ signifies and so makes you think of all men and the word ‘dog’

signifies and so makes you think of all dogs, then the complex expression ‘man and dog’ will signify all men plus all dogs.

By the same token, the complex expression ‘man or dog’ signifies the very same things: all men and all dogs. The difference between ‘and’ and ‘or’ is of course terribly important for certain purposes, but does not affect the signification of either expression. They are so to speak “logical particles”—syncategoremata. Other words, the ones that do contribute to an expression’s signification are called categorematic expressions.

OK, now back to our example. The expression ‘having whiteness’, we said, is a nominal definition of the name ‘white’, and the latter name serves as simply a kind of shorthand abbreviation for the former.

Now nominal definitions are complex expressions, and so signify the sum total of whatever their constituent categorematic names signify. In our example, ‘having whiteness’ has only one constituent categorematic name, ‘whiteness’, which makes one think of whiteness—and that is all. (The ‘having’ there seems to be regarded as a syncategorema—without any independent significative function.)

Hence, as Anselm says (see above):

For since the name ‘white’ does not signify anything else than does the expression ‘having whiteness’, [therefore] just as the expression by itself (*per se*) establishes an understanding of whiteness for me, and not of the thing that has whiteness, so does the name.

Contrast this now with the absolute name ‘man’. That name likewise has a definition, but this time a so called “real” definition: ‘rational animal’. Now if absolute names were regarded as simply shorthand abbreviations of their definitions in the way connotative names are of theirs, then whenever I used the name ‘man’, I would be in effect using in abbreviated fashion the expression ‘rational animal’. But in virtue of the “add them up” principle we saw just a moment ago, the expression ‘rational animal’ not only signifies rational animals—i.e., men—but also signifies all animals in virtue of the second component of the definition. Hence if absolute names were simply abbreviations of their real definitions, as connotative names are of theirs, then whenever I used the name ‘man’ I would be made to think of all animals whatever.

Worse, ‘animal’ itself has a real definition: ‘sensitive organism’. (That is, endowed with sensation. We’re not talking here about delicate emotions or poetic souls.)

And ‘organism’ does too, and so on until we come to a fully expanded real definition of man as a “rational, sensitive, living, corporeal substance.” (The sequence ends there, since substance is an Aristotelian category and cannot be defined in terms of a higher genus. We won’t worry about the reasons for that here.) Thus if absolute names were simply abbreviations of their definitions, then whenever I used the name ‘man’ I would be made to think of all substances whatsoever. And this is just not so.

It follows then that absolute names are not just abbreviations of their real definitions. Real definitions do not therefore just introduce a more abbreviated terminology, as for

instance definitions do in certain styles of modern formal logical systems. Something else is involved. Real definitions are supposed to have something to do with the internal metaphysical structure of the thing defined.

Hence, since absolute names are not just abbreviations, they may have alternative, non-synonymous real definitions. Those definitions must pick out the same things—and indeed, necessarily pick out the same things, since we’re talking about definitions after all. But they need not have the same constituent expressions.

This is why I said a little while ago, when we were talking about Augustine, that even though what the (absolute) name ‘man’ names automatically has humanity (and therefore rationality, animality, substantiality, etc.), it doesn’t name man under a condition. The name ‘man’ is not simply an abbreviated formula for some condition like that.

In drawing these consequences, I am of course going way beyond anything explicitly found in Anselm’s *De Grammatico*. But I do not think I am violating that text. I’m simply drawing out some of the implications in it, implications that will be articulated explicitly in the later development of connotation-theory.

One other complicating point is worth noting here. Although I said that in the later theory, connotative names are simply shorthand abbreviations of their nominal definitions, we have already seen a case where this will not work without some adjustments.

‘Blindness’, to use one of Anselm’s examples from *On the Fall of the Devil*, does not have a nominal definition. It cannot be regarded as simply an abbreviation of a more complex expression. ‘Blindness’, we said, is only a kind of “incomplete symbol”; it can only be defined in context. That is, it is not the single name ‘blindness’ that can be regarded as an abbreviation for something else; rather it is the construction ‘x has blindness’ or ‘blindness is in x’ that can be regarded as an abbreviation for ‘x does not have sight’.

This is also something that will be developed in the later Middle Ages, sometimes as part of a theory of connotation and sometimes as part of a related logical theory known as “exposition.” We won’t pursue the point here.

There is one other important thing to be learned from Anselm’s remark about ‘white’ and ‘having whiteness’. Both expressions, he says (claim (c) above), signify—that is, per se signify—only whiteness. They do not signify per se the thing that has the whiteness. That is to say, the nominal definition of ‘white’ is simply ‘having whiteness’; it is not ‘thing having whiteness’ or ‘substance having whiteness’ or anything like that. And Anselm insists on this pretty strongly.

Similarly, the nominal definition of ‘literate’ (*grammaticus*) is ‘having literacy (*grammatica*)’, not ‘man having literacy’. Otherwise, if the nominal definition did include the word ‘man’, then when we say ‘He is a literate man’—as we certainly can say with grammatical propriety—then, since connotative terms are just abbreviations of their definitions, we would in effect be saying ‘He is a man having literacy man’, or something like that. (See Passage (5). The technical word for this kind of “pointless repetition” is nugation.) And that is something we certainly cannot say with grammatical propriety.

Hence the fact that connotative adjectives, at any rate, can grammatically modify nouns implies that those nouns cannot be already built into the nominal definitions of those adjectives. (Whether the same point can be made in general, for words other than adjectives, is perhaps open to question, but Anselm apparently thinks it can.)

Now this raises an obvious question. If ‘white’ does not contain in its nominal definition a name for the bearer of whiteness, then how can the name ‘white’ be said to signify that bearer *per aliud*? In short, how in the case of connotative names does appellation get to be a kind of signification at all?

We are now in a position to see what signification per se is: An ABSOLUTE name signifies per se (= is truly predicable of) just what it APPELLATES. A CONNOTATIVE (= “shorthand”) name signifies per se just what the absolute names in its NOMINAL DEFINITION (= fully expanded form) appellate. But, again, what is signification per aliud—and how is it a kind of signification?

On this point, Anselm gives a very curious illustration (Passage (6)). Suppose you saw a white horse and a black ox, and someone told you “Strike it!,” and you asked “Which one?” If he then said “The white” (I want to leave out the noun in virtue of the above argument), you would know which one he meant; you would think of the white horse.

Now in a sense it is by means of the word ‘white’ that you are made to think of the horse; it’s the only word in the sentence, after all. (In English, I added the definite article ‘the’. But there is nothing corresponding to it in the Latin. And in any case, it’s not the definite article that is making me think of the horse.) But the word ‘white’ cannot all by itself make me think of the horse. If you couldn’t see the horse, say, you wouldn’t know what the fellow meant. It is only in virtue of something else—in virtue of your seeing the white horse, and the other circumstances of the story—that the word ‘white’ can make you think of the horse and know it is what is meant.

Hence the term ‘white’ does not *per se*—by itself—signify the bearer of whiteness, but only with the help of something else—*per aliud*, only with the help of the circumstances, the context.

Signification *per aliud* is therefore a thoroughly context-dependent notion. It depends on appellation or naming in the occurrent sense, what a term is actually used to appellate or name on a given occasion.

In Anselm’s semantics, therefore, signification *per se* is the dominant notion. Signification *per aliud* is a definitely subordinate, and indeed rather strained and contrived, kind of signification.

Trinity, Incarnation, Original Sin

I now want to turn to talk about a cluster of inescapably theological topics: Anselm’s views on the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation (that Jesus was both God and man),

and original sin. (I am no theologian, so I'm only going to spend a short time on these themes. But they are very rich themes!)

At the very end of the course, I want to talk about the *Cur Deus Homo*, which contains Anselm's so called soteriology (= theory of salvation), which is an extremely interesting and influential work. But for now, I want to treat the theological issues that come up in a number of other works, or places in works.

When we were talking about the *Monologion* early in this course, I mentioned that after introducing the notion of the Divine Word (what Williams translates as the “divine utterance”) in *Monologion* Chaps. 10–12—which is going to lead him into a head-on discussion of the Trinity—Anselm digresses to talk about all sorts of other things, before returning to a discussion of the Trinity in Chap. 29 or thereabouts (it's not clear exactly when we start talking about the Trinity again). The Trinitarian discussion then continues through Chap. 63.

So we'll want to talk about this long passage in the *Monologion*. There's also some Trinitarian discussion in the *Proslogion*, but I won't talk about that separately, since I don't think it really adds anything significant to what we already have in the *Monologion*.

But there also several other texts where Anselm discusses the Trinity and the related issues I want to talk about:

- A letter *On the Incarnation of the Word* (completed in 1094, within a year after he was made Archbishop of Canterbury).
- *On the Virginal Conception and on Original Sin* (1099).
- *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit* (1102). This is not in the Williams volume of *Basic Writings*, but there is a copy of it in the earlier Davies/Evans volume of Anselm's *Major Works*.

All of these works involve the crucial distinction between Person and nature, which comes up in two central Christian theological doctrines: the Trinity and the Incarnation. So we need to set up some background.

The doctrine of the Trinity is based on some very puzzling Scriptural passages. For example, Jesus says both “I and the Father are one,” and yet “The Father is greater than I.” Again, Jesus is going to depart but will also send the “Spirit” to his disciples. At first, no one knew quite what to make out of these passages

Eventually, through a series of great doctrinal ecumenical Councils of the early Church (4th-6th centuries), some ground-rules were established for how to treat these things. To begin with, we have this notion of Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Now

1. The Father is God.
2. The Son is God.
3. The Holy Spirit is God.
4. Father \neq Son, Son \neq Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit \neq Father.

5. There is only one God.

The problem, of course, is that (1)–(5) look just inconsistent. (1)–(4) seem to imply the denial of (5)—and in fact to entail tritheism, as late paganism and Islam thought. But Christianity simultaneously wants to maintain that, no, it is resolutely monotheist.

Eventually people began to realize that part of the problem here is that we're not uniformly counting the same kinds of things in these claims. And so we begin to get distinctions being drawn.

The Greek Church developed its own set of terminology here, while the Latin Church developed a somewhat different terminology, influenced in large part by Augustine's famous *On the Trinity* and by Boethius's so called "Theological Tractates" (early 6th century).

Eventually the picture came to be something like this: When we say 'God', what we're referring to is a substance or nature—and there's only one of those. The divine nature—divinity—is such that it allows (and requires) exactly one thing that has (or, because of divine simplicity, *is*) that nature. (Recall the argument in *Monologion*, Chap. 3.) Hence monotheism.

On the other hand, when we're talking about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and about how they're all distinct, we're not counting substances or natures. We're counting persons. Hence we get talk about the three persons of the Trinity, and about three persons with one nature or essence.

Well, that's fine, but what is a person? Etymologically, the word just means a "mask"—something you "speak through." But we don't want to push that etymological metaphor too hard. The doctrine isn't that the three persons are just three different disguises God wears, three different faces God puts on. In fact, that view became the heresy known as "modalism." There's something more metaphysically robust here than that.

Boethius, in his *Contra Eutychen* (the official title of which is "On Person and the Two Natures") defines person as: "an individual substance of a rational nature." And this definition became classic. Unfortunately, it doesn't help us very much, other than telling us that persons are conscious ("rational") things. The fact that we're talking about an individual substance doesn't help here, because we already know that the nature or substance we're talking about is individual to begin with—there's only one God, remember. In fact, all we have is simply a restatement of our problem: how we can have these three persons (three individual substances of a rational nature) all of whom are distinct from one another and yet all of them somehow the same individual substance or nature called "God."

There's another doctrine involved here as well. Not only are the notions of person and nature severed so that we have these three distinct persons sharing the same totally INDIVIDUAL nature (the doctrine of the Trinity); they're also severed in the other direction as well—we can have one person with multiple natures. In fact that's exactly what happens in the Incarnation, where—according to the doctrine—Jesus is the second

person of the Trinity (= the Son), but has two complete natures, a divine nature and a human one: he is both completely God and completely a human being.

So it goes both ways. In the case of the Trinity, we have one individual substance or nature with multiple persons. In the case of the Incarnation, we have one individual person with multiple natures.

These two doctrines have been the motor that has driven a great deal of the most subtle medieval thinking.

You may think these exotic points are of interest only for believing Christians of a fairly orthodox persuasion. But if you do, you're wrong. As often happens in philosophy, concepts and distinctions that are originally formulated for a certain highly specialized purpose, once made, are there to be used for any other purposes that come along. For example, consider John Locke's discussion of personal identity in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chap. 27. Locke is not talking about theology at all, but about philosophy of mind, about reward and punishment, and about personal happiness. Here's part of what he says:

(§ 23) ... Could we suppose two distinct incommunicable consciousnesses acting [= activating] the same body, the one constantly by day, the other by night; and, on the other side, the same consciousness acting by intervals two distinct bodies: I ask, in the first case, whether the day and the night man would not be two as distinct persons as Socrates and Plato; and whether, in the second case, there would not be one person in two distinct bodies, as much as one man is the same in two distinct clothings.

Again

(§ 25) ... In all which account of self, the same numerical substance is not considered as making the same self: but the same continued consciousnesses, in which several substances may have been united, and again separated from it, ...

This is a classic discussion, and it is still with us and still influential. It has nothing to do with theology whatsoever, and yet it could not have been written without the distinction between person and nature or substance, which comes from the theological background of the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation.

Augustine's Theory

The classic discussion of the Trinity in the Western Church (let's set aside the Incarnation for a moment) is Augustine's monumental *De trinitate*. This is a long work, and is immensely rich.

Augustine in no way thinks he is proving the doctrine of the Trinity in this work (or anywhere else). He doesn't think it can be proven; it is something that can only be known

through revelation. But what he does try to do in this work is to find helpful ways for us to think about the Trinity, to try to make some sense out of the doctrine. The truth of the doctrine is taken as a starting point for the work; that's not up for discussion in it.

Augustine argues that man is made in the image of God, as it says in Gen. 1:26. It doesn't say that about any of the rest of creation. And therefore there must be certain ways in which human beings resemble God that go beyond the ways other creatures resemble God.

Now in the case of other creatures, Genesis reports simply that "God said, Let there be ..." this and that. But in the case of mankind alone, it reports something different. It says (1:26 again): "Then God said, Let us make man in our image and likeness." Notice the plural there.

Who could they be? Obviously, "they" can only be the Trinity, since there simply isn't any other "us" around before the creation of human beings. (Even if you believe there were angels around before human beings—which Genesis says nothing about—they certainly weren't doing any creating.)

Now Augustine thinks this is significant. The fact that the passage in the creation story that indicates that man has a special resemblance-relation to God is also the only passage in that story where God speaks in the plural suggests that this special resemblance-relation includes traces of the Trinitarian aspect of God. And so we should expect to find in human beings certain features that model the Trinity (imperfectly, to be sure).

Augustine thinks this kind of modeling can be found most clearly in the case of the human mind.

He considers several different ways in which we can find a kind of "trinitarian" structure in the human mind. But the one that seems to work best, and certainly the one that people were most impressed with, was the distinction between memory, understanding, and will in the human mind.

(Note: "Memory" for Augustine doesn't just mean memory of the past. For him, you can remember the future too! The word he uses for "to remember" really means something more like "to call to mind," "be mindful of.")

Here's part of what he says (*De trinitate*, 10.11.18). (DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT "PASSAGES FROM AUGUSTINE ON THE TRINITY—this is passage (1).")

Memory, understanding, and will are not three lives or three minds but one life and one mind. Hence, they are not three substances but only one. Insofar as memory is called life and mind and substance, it is being spoken of with respect to itself. Insofar as it is called simply memory, it is spoken of in relation to something else. The same thing holds for understanding and will—both of which may be spoken of relatively. But with respect to itself, each is life, mind, and essence. Thus, these three are one insofar as each is one life, one mind, one essence [i.e., the same one life, mind, essence] ... But they are three insofar as they are spoken of in relation to

one another. If they were not equal [the three persons of the Trinity are supposed to be all EQUAL, ON A PAR]—each to the other and each to all— they would not comprehend one another. For not only is each one comprehended by each one but all are comprehended by each. I remember that I have memory, understanding and will; I understand that I understand and will and remember; I will that I will and remember and understand; and at one and the same time I remember my entire memory, understanding, and will.

As a result of this line of thinking, we get the model according to which the three persons of the Trinity are related as God's memory, understanding, and will. The Father = God's memory, the Son = God's understanding, the Holy Spirit = God's will. Yet each of them is identical to God, just as in a human being, each of memory, understanding, and will is identical to the mind. (Augustine does not have faculty-theory of the mind, according to which these would be distinct parts of the mind.)

Now of course there are lots of problems here. First of all, it may appear that all Augustine has done here is to take a very puzzling and seemingly paradoxical doctrine of the Trinity and model it in terms of an equally puzzling and paradoxical account of the human mind—so that nothing has been gained.

But that's not what's going on. Augustine doesn't think of this as modeling the doctrine in terms of a theory of the mind, but rather modeling the doctrine in terms of the way we experience our own mind. You may disagree with that, but that's what he thinks.

Note also: This is a model, but it's not intended to be a analogy in the sense of merely a metaphor. This is not meant to be just pictorial thinking or symbolism. It's more than that; it's a real resemblance between the human mind and the Trinity.

Contrast this with another example Augustine gives in a different work, *Faith and the Creed*, 9. 17 (Passage (2) on your handout):

For although we cannot say of a spring that it is the river, nor of the river that it is the spring, nor of a draught taken from either of these that it is either the river or the spring—nevertheless we call all three water, both individually and collectively.

That's just a metaphor, and is not presented as anything more. That's literature, whereas Augustine thinks the earlier model is metaphysics (or something close).

It's worth noting that Anselm himself uses a very similar metaphor, the famous metaphor of the Nile (*On the Incarnation of the Word*, § 13, *Major Works*, pp. 232–33). There he says (ignore your knowledge of actual African geography) that the Nile is a spring flowing through a river into a lake. Yet it's all one Nile.

Examples like that are not meant to be taken as anything more than metaphors. The examples in terms of psychology are; they're meant to be taken seriously. For Augustine,

they don't prove anything; they don't even really explain anything. But they're not just flights of fancy.

Anselm's Monologion

Anselm's first pass at a theoretical discussion of the Trinity comes in the central parts of the *Monologion*, beginning around Chap. 29.

By and large, it's an Augustinian picture Anselm presents. But there are some notable differences.

First of all, what exactly does he think he's doing in these passages? Here's, for example, what Jasper Hopkins says in his *Companion to the Study of St. Anselm*, p. 90:

Anselm supposes that not only can God's existence be proven but also God's nature as trinity. The *Monologion* represents the extended attempt to formulate the proof.

On the other hand, in the very next paragraph (pp. 90–91), he says:

The *Monologion* contains no sound demonstration of the triunity [“three-in-one-ness”] professed by Christian theism. What it does contain, though, are various analogies and similarities from the domain of human experience which tend to suggest a relationship of three-in-one. Anselm hopes that under the guidance of these patterns, the human mind may come to glimpse, as through a glass darkly, the rationale inherent in the Godhead. By invoking these patterns of similarity, Anselm's program is thoroughly Augustinian, as are the linguistic forms through which God's trinity is referred to.

These seem to me to be two quite incompatible views. When he says in the latter passage that the *Monologion* “contains no sound demonstration,” I take it he's not just saying the arguments don't work, but saying that Anselm doesn't even regard them as fully demonstrative arguments.

But the former passage seems to be saying that that's exactly what he is trying to do. And if that's right, it's far more than anything Augustine ever tried to do. I must say, the former passage seems to me to be correct. To be sure, Anselm toward the end of the *Monologion* allows that we can't really comprehend how all this works. See the chapter title for Chap. 64: “Although this cannot be explained, it must nevertheless be believed.” And Chap. 65: “How a true conclusion had been reached regarding an ineffable thing”—and that's a baffling chapter.

But I don't see anything in the *Monologion* to suggest that the work takes the Trinity as a GIVEN, as Augustine does, and is just trying to find some way of thinking about it. On the

contrary, remember what he said in the “Prologue” to the *Monologion* about the goal of that work (p. 1):

absolutely nothing in it would be established by the authority of Scripture: rather, whatever the conclusion of each individual investigation might assert, the necessity of reason would concisely prove, and the clarity of truth would manifestly show, that it is the case, by means of a plain style, unsophisticated arguments, and straightforward disputation.

And he doesn't mean to exclude what he says about the Trinity from this methodological statement. For, just a few paragraphs later—still in the “Prologue” (p. 2)—he explicitly mentions the doctrine of the Trinity, and mentions Augustine's own *De trinitate* in this connection.

Anselm's other writings on the Trinity, the letter *On the Incarnation of the Word* and the *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit*, to be sure, are aimed at a different audience. They do presuppose the doctrine and are aimed at Christians trying to understand it, not at the general audience that is the target of the *Monologion*.

So, in my estimation, we have something really pretty bold going on in the *Monologion*, and as far as I know something previously unseen in the history of Christian theology.

There's another difference between the Augustinian approach and what Anselm does in the *Monologion*. This one isn't perhaps especially significant. But here it is:

Anselm doesn't speak in terms of the divine memory, intellect and will, the way Augustine does. In fact, perhaps most authors after Augustine seem to drop the talk about God's memory. The term is a little odd even in Augustine, as we've noted.

So in many authors, including Augustine, we don't get a good psychological analog for God the Father. Some authors, instead of talking about the divine memory, will simply talk about the divine mind—which doesn't mean intellect, since God's intellect is supposed to be the second person of the Trinity, God the Son. (Recall that Augustine's talk about memory simply means bringing to mind.)

Anselm will sometimes use the expression “supreme Spirit” to refer to God the Father. But he doesn't typically talk about memory in this context.

The second person of the Trinity Anselm describes as God's intellect—or, as we've already learned to call it from *Monologion*, Chap. 10—the divine utterance or word. This is thoroughly Augustinian, including the use of the term ‘word’.

The third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit (the term is a little awkward, as everyone recognizes, since after all the word ‘spirit’ applies to all three persons), Anselm doesn't typically speak of in terms of God's will, but rather in terms of love. (Love and the will are closely connected, to be sure, but Anselm usually uses love rather than will in connection with the Trinity.)

So here's the picture then (let's leave the Holy Spirit aside for a moment): God knows himself—i.e., understands himself. So God is both the knower and the thing known. (God

also knows creatures, of course, but they don't get involved in the inner workings of the Trinity.)

Hence, there is a kind of inner duality in God—so to speak, a kind of subject/object polarity.

This doesn't mean we've got two gods, of course. There's only one God; we saw that back in *Monologion*, Chap. 3 (the "exists through" argument). And it doesn't mean there are any parts or internal metaphysical structure. No, God is metaphysically simple (*Monol.*, Chap. 17).

And yet we have this duality. Somehow we've got two. But what do we have two of?

Here Anselm candidly admits he doesn't know quite what to say. He of course subscribes to the traditional Latin Church's formula that God is one essence or substance or nature with three PERSONS, but he also says there really isn't any completely appropriate word for what we've got three of. (*Monol.*, Chaps. 38, 79). We don't want to think of the three persons as implying that God is some kind of committee or club. We don't want to turn the doctrine of the Trinity into tritheism.

Here's part of what he says in *Monol.*, Chap. 38 (pp. 46–47—Anselm hasn't yet brought the Holy Spirit into the picture):

But although this is so, it is nevertheless in a strange way quite clear that the one whose Word exists [God the Father] cannot be his own Word [God the Son], and the Word cannot be the one whose Word he is [the Son cannot be the Father] ... [I]n virtue of the fact that the supreme spirit [the Father] does not exist from the Word, whereas the Word exists from him,⁴ they admit an ineffable plurality.

Ineffable indeed—for although necessity compels that they be *two*, there is no way to express what they are two of. For even if they can be said to be two equals [which they can] (or something like that) in relation to each other, if it is asked what the thing is of which these relatives are said [i.e., two equal what], one will not be able to answer in the plural, as when two lines are said to be equal or two human beings to be similar. Certainly they are not two equal spirits, or two equal Creators, or two of anything that signifies either their essence or their relation to creation. Nor are they two of anything that signifies the relationship of one to the other; they are not two Words or two images. After all, the Word's being a word or image implies a relationship to another; he must be the word or image of something. These are the distinguishing characteristics of the Word [= the Son], so much so that they cannot in any way be shared by the other [= by

⁴ This is not supposed to be creation, although it's a delicate matter to explain why not. One difference, of course, is that creation is supposed to be contingent, a result of a free choice on God's part, whereas the generation of the Word from the Father is not supposed to be contingent.

the Father]. For he whose word or image he is, is neither an image or a word.

So it is established that one cannot express what the supreme spirit and his Word are two of, although they must be two because of their individual properties. [I'll say something about this talk of "properties" in connection with the next passage, below.] For it is the distinguishing characteristic of the second [= the Son] that he exist from the first [= the Father], and it is the distinguishing characteristic of the first that second exists from him.

Before we go on, let's quickly bring the Holy Spirit into the picture. He first shows up in *Monologion*, Chap. 49.

The "supreme spirit" [= the Father] KNOWS itself, and this is responsible for the duality that gives us the first two "persons" of the Trinity. But the supreme spirit not only knows itself, it also knows that it's very good! And so it loves itself. And this love is a third whatever we want to call it. Furthermore, the "supreme spirit" not only loves itself, it also loves its Word [= the Son], and the Word loves it, and it's all one and the same love (*Monologion*, Chaps. 49–54). And this what we come to call the Holy Spirit, as the third "person" of the Trinity.

Once again, Anselm puts the Holy Spirit in terms of love, not so much in terms of will, although clearly love is a matter of the will.

Now let's pause and look at some of the implications of all this.

There are two (or perhaps three) big factors at play in this discussion. One is what we might call THE PRINCIPLE OF INDIVIDUATION—in the sense of whatever it is that allows us in some cases to have multiple individuals of the same kind.

The other is the twin principles known as THE IDENTITY OF INDISCERNIBLES and THE INDISCERNIBILITY OF IDENTICALS. (For our purposes we don't have to distinguish these carefully here—we'll just call them both "the identity of indiscernibles.") These basically say:

x and y are identical (are one thing) ↔ whatever you can truly say
about x you can truly say about y, and vice versa.

(Note: The "Identity of indiscernibles" is a claim, a proposition. The "Principle of individuation" is not a claim or proposition, but the answer to the question: what is it that allows us to have multiple individuals of the same kind?)

What the two factors have in common is that they both have to do with counting.

Now on the first point (the Principle of Individuation), Anselm—like most authors in the Middle Ages as well as today, at least among those who address the issue—seems to hold that if you're going to have multiple individuals of the same kind, you need some kind of complexity in them (or at least in one of them).

After all, if they're metaphysically (structurally) exactly alike, then how can we say there're two of them instead of just one? And if they're metaphysically totally different, then how can we say they are two of the same kind? (There are other view on this, but this is the most common view.)

No, if they're going to be two things of the same kind, we need them to be structurally alike in some respects, and structurally different in other respects. That is, we need some kind of complexity in at least one of them.

But we know that in God there is no complexity. God is simple in all essential respects (*Monologion*, Chap. 17), and of course there are no accidents in God.

Hence, as a result of these metaphysical considerations about individuation, we end up being resolutely monotheistic; there is only one God.

On the other hand, what about that other principle we mentioned: the “Identity of Indiscernibles”? This, you'll recall, was the principle that:

x and y are identical (are one thing) \leftrightarrow whatever you can truly say about x you can truly say about y, and vice versa.

Notice that this claim does not exactly link counting with metaphysical structure at all, but with language (what you can “truly say” about something). It doesn't say, for instance, that if x and y FAIL to be one thing (and so are two), there must be some metaphysical or structural difference between them; it's just that you can say different things about them.

Yet, although the Identity of Indiscernibles doesn't exactly link counting with metaphysical structure, it has a metaphysical result. If different things are true of x and y, then x and y have to be really metaphysically distinct; otherwise you'd have a contradiction. (If P is true of x but not of y, then if also x = y, we would have both Px and $\sim Px$.)

And that's exactly what we have in the case of the Trinity.

As Anselm says (*Monologion*, Chap. 38 again, p. 47):

So it is established that one cannot express what the supreme spirit and his Word are two of, although they must be two because of their individual properties. ['Properties' is a Boethian word. It's not a metaphysical term here. That is, it doesn't mean the structural features of a thing, either “essential” or “accidental” features. It just means “peculiarities” or something like that—what you can say about a thing but can't say about anything else.] For it is the distinguishing characteristic of the second [the Son] that he exist from the first [the Father], and it is the distinguishing characteristic of the first that second exists from him.

And so too, *mutatis mutandis*, for the Holy Spirit (although he's the one in the Trinity people usually don't have a lot to say about).

The result, therefore, is that the three persons of the Trinity are really distinct (it's not just a manner of speaking), because they are related to one another in distinct ways.

This is what is meant when it's sometimes said that the distinctions among the three persons of the Trinity are relational. Augustine develops this, as do Anselm and virtually everyone else.

So what I'm suggesting is that part of the "mystery" of the Trinity arises from the clash between two fundamental and primordial views: **(1) the Principle of Individuation**: that distinguishing a plurality of things of the same kind requires some kind of metaphysical complexity somewhere (hence monotheism, since God's not complex); and **(2) the Identity of Indiscernibles**: that, metaphysical complexity or not, two things have got to be in some sense distinct if there are different things that can be truly said about them.

OK, that's what the *Monologion* has to say about the Trinity.

Anselm and Roscelin

Now I want to talk a little about the *On the Incarnation of the Word*. As I mentioned earlier, this relatively short work was completed in 1094. But we have several preliminary drafts of it, and it has a rather interesting history.

We need to go back some four or five years earlier, to 1089–90, and introduce a new character, one Roscelin of Compiègne. (Where is Compiègne? SEE THE HANDOUT FOR A MAP.)

Roscelin was an itinerant "secular master." To say he was an "itinerant master" means that he was a teacher who went around from town to town and sold his services to anyone who was willing to pay for them. There were several such "itinerant masters" at this time. (Recall that this was before universities had yet come into existence.) To say he was "secular" does not mean he wasn't a cleric. It simply means that he was not in a religious order like the Benedictines. Clergy who were in a religious order were under the "rule" (*regula*) of that order (like the famous "Rule of St. Benedict"), and so were called the "regular clergy." Clergy who were not in a religious order were called the "secular clergy," and they were under the authority of the local bishop.

Because Roscelin wasn't in a religious order, he didn't have any fellow members of an order (more or less like "fraternity brothers") to write his biography, as sometimes happened with the "regular clergy." (Think of Anselm's own biographer Eadmer, a fellow Benedictine.) As a result, we don't know a lot about Roscelin's life, although he apparently was a disagreeable and argumentative fellow who made enemies wherever he went. So most of his press is negative, and we should perhaps be careful about attributing views to him with confidence.

In any case, around 1089–90, Anselm got a letter from a certain John the Monk, who writes to Anselm as if he is one of Anselm's own monks at Bec, but I'm not sure about that. (Distribute the handout "Three Letters concerning Roscelin of Compiègne," and look at the first passage.)

John reports that Roscelin had made a very shocking argument:

If the three persons [of the Trinity] are only one thing and not three things on their own, like three angels or three souls, in such a way that nevertheless they are the same in will and power [i.e., they all will the same things, and can all do the same things—so this first part of the sentence says: if the three persons of the Trinity are *not* like that, but rather are *one* thing], therefore the Father and Holy Spirit were incarnated along with the Son. He says that the lord Archbishop Lanfranc had granted this statement and that you grant it in arguing the point with him [apparently with Roscelin himself, not with Lanfranc].

In other words, Roscelin is claiming, the doctrine of the Trinity can be interpreted either (1) in such a way that it's not just the second person of the Trinity—God the Son—who was made incarnate in Jesus, but all three persons together, or else (2) the doctrine of the Trinity amounts to tritheism (“three things on their own, like three angels or three souls”). And furthermore, Roscelin was saying that Lanfranc and Anselm both agreed with him!

This of course was unacceptable. Furthermore, it was a kind of challenge Anselm had never had to deal with before. Previously, his intellectual exchanges seem to have been mostly with his own monks at Bec, whose good will he could take for granted—and it was all very “in house.”⁵ But now Roscelin was claiming Anselm's support for outright heresy, and doing so in apparently a public way that went far beyond the walls of the Abbey of Bec. Anselm had to defend his orthodoxy for the first time.

He replied to John sometime before 1092, excusing himself for his long delay. (See the second passage on the handout.)

Around the same time, he also wrote to the Bishop of Beauvais, a certain Fulco (see the third letter on the handout), simply affirming his allegiance to the orthodox statements of the traditional Creeds. Fulco was asked to take Anselm's letter to a regional Church Council of Soissons that was to be convened in 1092 and that was going to deal with the matter.

At the same time, Anselm started to draft a reply to Roscelin. But then he heard that Roscelin had recanted his views at the Council of Soissons, and so put the reply aside as no longer needed.

Also in 1092, Anselm went on one of his visits to England, the one during which he was eventually named Archbishop of Canterbury (1093) and never returned to Bec. During this trip, he heard that despite recanting his views at Soissons, Roscelin had taken them up again anyway, and so he sent to Bec for his unfinished draft of a reply to Roscelin.

⁵ There was also of course Anselm's exchange with Gaunilo, who was not one of his fellow-monks at Bec. But that exchange was conducted, recall, with the utmost good will and respect on both sides.

(On all this, see the opening paragraphs of *On the Incarnation of the Word*, in *Basic Writings*, pp. 213–14.)

He tinkered with his reply through the Spring of 1093, but didn't get very far with it. (He was busy being Archbishop of Canterbury, after all!) We have manuscript copies of at least five different drafts of the work. He completed the final draft in 1094, and that is the work we know as *On the Incarnation of the Word*.

The interesting thing here is that Roscelin may have had a point in appealing to Anselm as supporting his own view. (The claim that Lanfranc also sided with him seems to have been without merit.)

In his first draft—although, interestingly, this passage is omitted from the final draft—Anselm says that Roscelin had quoted him as saying that the persons of the Trinity were related to the one substance God as the three qualities WHITE, JUST and LITERATE (*grammaticus*—note the term) might be related to a single human being.

If you take this analogy seriously and push it, it would imply that the relation between the one God and the three persons is like the relation of substance to accidents. This of course wouldn't work, since it would introduce ontological complexity into God.

Here's what Anselm admits (we do not have this in our *Basic Writings* volume, since it comes from the preliminary draft):

If 'white', 'just', and 'literate' are said of a certain man, for instance Saint Paul, they do not make many Pauls; similarly, if 'Father', 'Son' and 'Holy Spirit' are said of God, they do not make many Gods. This I accept, this I believe, this I do not deny that I said.

But although Anselm admits he said this, and even insists that in a sense it's strictly true (Father, Son and Holy Spirit don't make three Gods, to be sure), it's clear he doesn't any longer want to maintain the analogy that was the basis for what he said. And in fact, he drops all reference to this analogy—including the admission that he ever made it—in the final version of *On the Incarnation of the Word*.

There are a couple of other interesting matters I want to mention in connection with the final version of this work.

At the beginning of the final draft, Anselm tells us the story about the context that makes the work necessary in the first place (namely, Roscelin and his alarming statements about Anselm), and then goes on (pp. 215–18) to give a fairly extended discussion of the faith seeking understanding theme we saw already in the *Proslogion*. In the context, what he seems to be saying is that Roscelin doesn't really believe the true Christian faith—he's a heretic—and therefore is incompetent to talk about the Trinity; he simply doesn't understand the issues.

In this connection, Anselm brings up the problem of universals. This is something we haven't seen him explicitly mention so far this semester, but now he does.

I don't want to talk about the problem of universals very much here (that's another course entirely), but I do want to say a little about this particular passage in Anselm.

I mentioned earlier—in connection with the discussion in the *Monologion* of how God can and cannot be said to be in space and time (*Monol.*, Chap. 22–24)—that Boethius had given a classic definition of a universal as something that could be present **(a)** as a whole, **(b)** simultaneously, and **(c)** in some constitutive metaphysical way, to several things at once. (Remember I said that Platonic Forms were not universals, because they failed clause **(c)**.)

Now I should warn you that there's some scholarly dispute over whether Roscelin is getting a bum rap here. But it seems he did not believe in universals. He thought the only things that exist are entirely individual. He also seems to have held—and this is where we need to be especially careful about whether Roscelin actually held views that are attributed to him only by people who are attacking him—that there is no difference at all between an individual substance and its qualities (whether universal or not). E.g., an apple is identical with its redness.

And Anselm seems to be saying it is because of these views that Roscelin incompetent to talk about the Trinity. Here's what he says (p. 217):

... those dialecticians—or rather, heretics of dialectic—in our own day who suppose that universal substances are nothing but empty air (*flatus vocis*—literally, “verbal puffs”), who cannot understand color to be anything but body or human wisdom to be anything but the soul [in short, there is no distinction between substances and qualities], ought to be blown far away from any engagement with spiritual questions. ... For they do not yet even understand how the plurality of human beings in the species are one human being [that is, they are one in universal nature]. How, then, will they comprehend how the plurality of persons in that most hidden and most exalted nature—each of whom individually is God—are one God? Their minds are too dark to distinguish between a horse and its color. How, then, will they distinguish between the one God and his several relations? [Remember the Augustinian/Anselmian theory that the three personal are distinguished by their RELATIONSHIP to one another.] And finally, they cannot understand how something can be human without being an individual; there is no way they will understand anything to be human unless it is a human person, since every individual human being is a person. [I.e., for them there is no universal human nature. And remember Boethius's definition of a person as “an individual substance of a rational nature.”] How, then, will they understand that the Word assumed human being but did not assume a person: that the Word assumed another nature, not another person?

That last part is technical terminology. In the doctrine of the Incarnation—which is after all the topic of *On the Incarnation of the Word*—the second person of the Trinity, God

the Son who already has a (or rather the) divine nature, was said to assume a human nature, with the result that in the Incarnation we end up with one person with two natures.

Anselm is here saying that the assumed human nature has got to be the universal human nature. If it were an individual human nature, it would be a person (according to the Boethian definition), and we would end up with not only two natures in Jesus but with two persons as well—which is heresy. (Note that Anselm has just given us a theological reason for believing in universals: they are needed, he thinks, to avoid heresy about the Incarnation.)

Unfortunately, the appeal to a theory of universals, while it may help to sort out the doctrine of the Incarnation, doesn't seem to me to help with the doctrine of the Trinity at all, and in fact would seem to confirm tritheism, which was one of the horns of the dilemma Roscelin had tried to impose on Anselm.

Anselm says that if Roscelin can't understand how three human beings can share the one universal human nature, then he can't understand how the three persons of the Trinity are one God. But that would seem to suggest that the one divine nature is a universal divine nature. And in that case, then JUST AS when we have three individual persons sharing the one universal human nature, we say we have three men, SO TOO when we have three individual persons sharing the one divine nature, we would have to say we have three Gods—tritheism. Otherwise, I fail to see how Anselm can say the problem of universals is relevant here at all.

On the Procession of the Holy Spirit

I don't want to talk about *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit* beyond simply telling you what the topic is in that work. (This work is not in our *Basic Writings* volume, but it is in Davies and Evans, *Major Works*.)

First of all, "procession" in this context doesn't mean a parade. It refers to how the Holy Spirit proceeds from whatever it proceeds from.

In the early history of the Church, the first Ecumenical Council of all the bishops in Christianity (or at least all those who could come) was held in the Greek town of Nicaea in 325. There the fundamental doctrines of the faith were formulated in what has come to be known as the Nicene Creed. When it comes to the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, the Nicene Creed has little to say. It just says, "And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit."

In the Second Ecumenical Council, the Council of Constantinople in 381, this was filled out a little bit. It says:

And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who is adored at once and conglorified with the Father and the Son, [and] who spoke through the prophets.

Later on, particularly —but not exclusively—in the Latin West, the statement that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father" was revised to read "proceeds from the Father and

the Son.” The Latin for “and the Son” = *filioque*, so the controversy that eventually arose over this adjustment became known as the *Filioque Controversy*.

This expanded formula was debated on and off in both the Latin West and the Greek East for some time, but without there really being any great heat raised over the matter.

Then in 1014, the German Holy Roman Emperor Henry II went to Rome for his coronation and found that the Creed was not being used liturgically during the Mass, and he thought it should be. At his request, the Pope added the Creed, as it was received in the West with the *filioque*. This was the first time the phrase was used in the Mass at Rome.

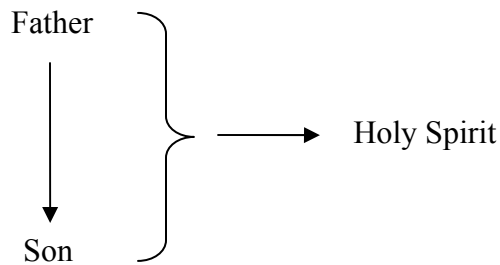
Forty years later, by 1054, the matter had contributed to the Great Schism between the Greek Eastern Church and Latin West. That “schism” endures to this day. The Greeks had decided they didn’t approve of the *filioque* addition, while the Latins insisted on it. Part of the Schism was theoretical, and part of it was political, and much of it was simply a matter of “hotheads” on both sides. On the theoretical side, in addition to the actual wording of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, the argument was also over whether the Pope had a right to make a change in the Creed on his own, without the authority of an Ecumenical Council behind him.

In 1098, while Anselm was in self-imposed exile at the papal court (because of a dispute with the King of England over the right of appointing bishops), he was appealed to by Pope Urban II to discuss this issue. There had been a Council called at Bari in Italy—not a full Ecumenical Council, but a lesser one—and it had been attended by certain representatives of the Greek Church, who were presenting their arguments against the addition of the *filioque*-clause to the Creed.

Urban II asked Anselm to reply to their arguments, and the result is *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit*.

What is the theoretical issue here? Well, clearly the Father in the Trinity is regarded by all parties as somehow the origin of the other two Persons. This “originating” should emphatically not be thought of as tantamount to creation. First of all, it’s eternal and necessary (while creation is neither), and second, the other two persons of the Trinity are in no sense inferior to the Father (as creatures are to their creator). Nevertheless, all parties agreed that the Trinity somehow starts from the Father.

The question is whether the Holy Spirit originates with the Son in addition to the Father. The Latins said yes (*filioque*), the Greeks said no. Here then is the Latin picture:



The relation of Father to Son is sometimes called Paternity, and the relation of both Father and Son to the Holy Spirit is sometimes called Spiration. These are the relations of origin to originated. We can also talk about the converse relations, the relations of originated to origin (in which case the arrows would go the other direction). Those relations are called Filiation (Son to Father) and Procession (Holy Spirit to Father and Son).

Now Anselm’s basic argument in *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit* is a kind of argument we will see much more prominently in the *Cur Deus Homo*—it’s an appeal to a kind of aesthetic appropriateness. After all, God can do nothing “unfitting,” and so among the “necessary reasons” he thinks we can use to argue for truths of the faith there are included not only logical or metaphysical arguments, but what we would think of as purely aesthetic considerations.

In the present instance, Anselm’s argument is purely of this aesthetic variety; it’s not particularly Scriptural, not particularly theological in the technical sense, and certainly not metaphysical. His point is simply that there is kind of symmetry on this Latin picture that is lacking on the Greek picture according to which the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone.

For on the Latin picture, each person of the Trinity has a certain feature that is unique to it, and each person has certain other features it shares with one of the other persons. (And of course there are features shared by all three, but those belong to the divine nature, and are not the relational features that distinguish the persons of the Trinity.)

The Father is the only person with Paternity, and the Son is the only person with Filiation. The Holy Spirit is the only person with Procession. Or, to put it in a way that doesn’t sound like a purely terminological matter: The Father is the only person who stands at the origin end of a one-to-one relation (Paternity). The Son is the only person who stands at the originated end of a one-to-one relation (Filiation). The Holy Spirit is the only person who stands at the originated end of a one-to-two relation (Procession)—or, equivalently, who does not stand at the origin end of a two-to-one relation (not Spiration), or who does not stand at the origin end of any relation (either Paternity or Spiration).

The Father and the Son are the only two persons who stand at the origin end of a two-to-one relation (namely, Spiration)—or at the origin end of any relation. The Son and the

Holy Spirit are the only two persons who do not stand at the origin end of a one-to-one relation (not Paternity), or who do stand at the originated end of any relation. The Father and the Holy Spirit are the only two persons who do not stand at the originated end of a one-to-one relation (not Filiation), or the only two persons who do not stand at the origin end of one relation and the originated end of another.

Obviously, the aesthetic symmetry is a bit strained here. But the point is that, strained or not, there is no such symmetry on the Greek view, according to which the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father. On that view, the Father is the only person who stands at the origin end of two relations (Paternity and Spiration). The Son and the Holy Spirit are the only two persons who do not stand at the origin end of any relation. But what is unique to the Son? What is unique to the Holy Spirit? What do the Father and the Son share? What do the Father and the Holy Spirit share?

We will see a lot more of this kind of appeal to symmetry in the *Cur Deus Homo*.

On the Virginal Conception and on Original Sin

Now I want to say a few things about the doctrine of original sin. We've already encountered this doctrine in *On Freedom of Choice* and in our discussion of *On the Fall of the Devil* (although it wasn't really talked about explicitly in the latter dialogue)—there we talked about the sin of Satan but not the original sin of Adam and Eve). And we'll see it again in *Cur Deus Homo*.

There are several theological points that come up in this dialogue. First of all, there is the doctrine of original sin itself, the doctrine that after the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, not only were they in big trouble, but so were all the rest of us—their descendants. In terms of Augustine's metaphor of the servant who jumped in a ditch rather than serve his master, not only did Adam and Eve jump in the ditch and were therefore punished, but all the rest of us are still being punished for what they did.

The difficulty with this doctrine is of course the notion of collective guilt it seems to imply, the idea that people who did not commit any crime can nevertheless be held responsible for and punished for the crimes of those who did.

But there is more. Anselm seems to have had the view that the only human being who was never "tainted" by original sin, from the moment of conception, was Jesus. And this comes out in this treatise.

This is complicated, because Anselm's name has often been associated with another doctrine that was becoming increasingly popular in his day, and not least among his own pupils: the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception holds that not only was Jesus conceived without original sin, but so was his mother Mary, through a unique grace of God. Mary was not somehow released from the stain of original sin; she never had it. This view was later declared (in the nineteenth century, by Pope Pius IX) to be part of the Catholic faith, but had not been settled in Anselm's own day.

As I say, Anselm's name is often associated with this doctrine, but he seems not to have held it, and in fact to have distanced himself from it. It conflicted with the doctrine of salvation he was working out. But in any event, he did maintain that this exemption from original sin held in the unique case of Jesus, because of the circumstances of his conception.

Anselm believed, as all other Western Christians of the time did too, that Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus. Jesus was not conceived in the normal manner, by the sexual intercourse of male and female (whether with Saint Joseph or any other male), but by the miraculous activity of God himself.

Hence the phrase "On the Virginal Conception" in the title of this work.

(The doctrine of virginal conception or virgin birth is NOT the same as the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, although people frequently confuse the two. Anselm believed the former but not the latter.)

OK, so let's look briefly at this treatise *On the Virginal Conception and on Original Sin*.

First of all, if you've looked at all at the *Cur Deus Homo* (as was assigned, after all), you've met Boso (pronounced exactly the way you're afraid it is). Boso was a monk at Bec, and apparently the only one there who Anselm thought was a serious interlocutor in discussion.

We know the names of various other monks at Bec, through letters and other sources. But Boso is the only one who actually appears in Anselm's writings. While the three "Philosophical Dialogues" and the *De grammatico* are merely dialogues between a "Master" and a "Student" (or "Disciple"), the *Cur Deus Homo* actually presents Boso as the partner in the dialogue.

Well, so too, although *On the Virginal Conception and on Original Sin* is not a dialogue at all but a sustained treatise, it is addressed at the very beginning to Boso, who apparently was the occasion for writing it in the first place.

OK, now what is original sin? The basic story is familiar enough. The story is that the serpent (= really Satan in disguise) tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, and she ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which they had been forbidden to eat. Then she in turn tempted Adam, and he ate it too. And so they both sinned. And—somehow—as a result of this primordial human sin, the entire human race has "fallen." The whole of human nature has lost justice (in the sense defined as early as *On Truth* and discussed in *On Freedom of Choice* and *On the Fall of the Devil*).

Hence we too (who belong to the human race)—all human beings with the sole exception of Jesus—come into the world without justice, and there's nothing we can do about it on our own. That's why salvation requires outside help (grace), which is the topic of *Cur Deus Homo*. *Cur Deus Homo* was written earlier (completed 1098) than *On the Virginal Conception and on Original Sin* (1099). And in fact, *On the Virginal Conception* is something of a "companion piece" to *Cur Deus Homo*, filling in some loose ends left open in the former work.

That's one theme: Original sin infects the whole of human nature—with the unique exception of Jesus. (Recall, Mary was subject to original sin; Anselm did not hold the doctrine of Immaculate Conception.)

But there's another theme that rests uneasily with this, and that's that “original sin”—as the name implies—has something to do with origins.

There's a very curious claim made at the end of *Cur Deus Homo* (and we might as well start bringing that into the picture)—*CDH* II.21—which argues that, while it is possible for human beings to be “saved,” it is impossible for the devils to be saved.

We'll perhaps look at this claim more closely later on. But for now I just want to bring out one point of the argument there: There's nothing like “original sin” for the devils.

They sinned, of course. But it doesn't work the same way. Why not? Because the devils do not share a common origin.

They share a nature or essence in common, to be sure. Devils are fallen angels, after all, and Anselm (unlike Aquinas) thinks all angels share the same angelic nature. But, he says (*CDH* II.21 [*Basic Writings*, p. 235]):

... unlike human beings they are not of the same race. For it is not the case that all angels are from one angel, as all human beings are from one human being [= Adam].

The word ‘race’ = *genus*, and has to do with “generating” and “generation.” The point, therefore, is simply that angels are not “descended” from one another, or from a common “ancestor.” They were each created separately—with the same nature, to be sure, but completely independently of one another.

What difference does this make? Well, here's where things get murky. The idea seems to be to fill in the gap somehow in the move between saying that Adam and Eve personally sinned and saying that their sin corrupts the whole of human nature.

Why should that result follow? I don't know how to fill in all the steps entirely, but part of the idea is that this follows in the case of human nature, because all other human beings are descended from Adam and Eve—whereas it doesn't follow for angelic nature because other angels are not in any sense descended from the ones who rebelled. The latter's sin remains purely their own personal matter. There's no notion of collective guilt or corporate responsibility for the angels, whereas there is for human beings.

Some Issues about Salvation and Original Sin

OK, let's get some of the issues out on the table, and then perhaps we can see how Anselm is attempting to weave them together.

Collective Guilt/Corporate Responsibility

The first issue we have to deal with is the notorious notion of collective guilt or corporate responsibility that seems to be implied in the doctrine of Original Sin. How is it that I can justly be punished for sins that I didn't commit, but someone else—namely, Adam and Eve—did? This is a notion that strikes us as profoundly foreign and just plain morally wrong.

To be sure, there are some cases where we hold one person responsible for another person's deeds. For instance, parents may be legally responsible—and liable—for what their children do. But children are never held responsible for what their parents do. And besides, children are legally incompetent. But both Adam/Eve and we their descendants are morally adults.

So what can we say to make sense of this view?

Well, here's one way of trying to make sense of it in part. I don't know of any secondary literature that develops this particular line of thinking, but it's perhaps the best I know of. I first found it suggested by certain remarks in Kierkegaard's *Concept of Anxiety*, and I was pretty surprised to find Anselm making some of the same claims. (In fact, SK sounds a lot like Anselm on many points.) Anselm doesn't develop the idea in the way I'm about to suggest any more than Kierkegaard does, but the parallels are there, and they are striking. Here goes:

Kierkegaard makes the puzzling claim that each individual human being is BOTH HIMSELF AND THE RACE. I.e., not "race" in the sense of racism, but in the sense of "descendants of Adam" that we just talked about.

The idea can perhaps be motivated like this: Suppose some recent ancestor in your immediate family was engaged in some particularly dastardly practice. (Let's say, he was a cannibal.) And you feel this somehow reflects on you. After all, this is the sort of thing families cover up and hide. You somehow feel lessened by the fact. But why should you? After all, he was the one who was a cannibal; you aren't! And yet you feel somehow implicated in his deeds.

(It works the other way too. You can feel proud of someone else's accomplishments. You somehow bask in the glory whenever your favorite sports team wins a big game. But again, why should you? After all, you had no part in it; you're not on the team, let's say.)

The point is that, whether or not we have a nice, tidy theory that explains this notion of collective responsibility, and in fact whether or not we think it theoretically makes no sense at all—nevertheless WE DO FEEL that responsibility, we feel MORALLY COMPROMISED by it. And furthermore we feel we SHOULD feel that way.

We don't have to accept that responsibility, of course. We can reject that feeling. But the only way to do that is to deal ourselves out of the family.

So too, the only way to avoid the responsibility for Adam's sin—or for anyone else's sin, for that matter—is to deal ourselves out of the human family. In short, to BECOME INHUMAN.

So too, Anselm says (*On the Virginal Conception and on Original Sin*, Chap. 10, p. 340):

... The only remaining possibility, then, is that all his [= Adam's] offspring are debtors [to God] for no other reason than that they are Adam: not, however, because they are Adam without qualification, but because they are Adam the sinner.

I think this approach has a lot going for it, and is one that hasn't been explored sufficiently in the literature—either on Kierkegaard or on Anselm.

But there's at least one problem with it that we need to acknowledge. It doesn't explain why I should be particularly responsible for the sin of Adam (or of Adam and Eve) any more than I should be responsible for your sins. And yet the doctrine of Original Sin says I am. It's the sin of Adam and Eve that corrupts the whole of human nature, and that will send me to eternal hellfire unless special steps are taken—not your sin, which may make me feel ashamed but will not damn me forever!

So what is it about the sin of Adam and Eve that is special?

Well, part of the idea seems to be that at the time of their sin, Adam and Eve were the only human beings who existed; human nature was at that time found only in them. And, he says (*On the Virginal Conception and on Original Sin*, Chap. 2, p. 330):

And because the whole of human nature was in them [= Adam and Eve], and nothing of human nature was outside them, the whole of human nature was weakened and corrupted.

Again, in Chap. 9 (p. 339), he says:

... if only Eve had sinned and not Adam, it would not have been necessary for the whole human race to perish [one of the traditional consequences of original sin] but only for Eve.

The idea then seems to be the peculiar view that if ALL the members of a species do x, then in a sense the species itself does x. Thus (*Cur Deus Homo* I.18, p. 274):

For since the whole of human nature was in our first parents [= Adam and Eve], the whole of human nature in them was overcome in such a way that it [= the NATURE] sinned, with the exception of that one man whom God knew how to keep free from Adam's sin [namely, Jesus] ...

This is a view associated with Odo or Tournai (slightly earlier than Anselm), who seems to have held it precisely in order to make sense of the doctrine of original sin.

Is this an appeal to the theory of universals? I think it is Odo, but I'm not sure in Anselm. Note the implication: If it is, then here is another place where Anselm seems to be implying that orthodoxy REQUIRES realism with respect to universals. (We've already

seen this in connection with the Incarnation in *On the Incarnation of the Word*, in his criticisms of Roscelin.)

But I'm not sure this is what is going on in Anselm. What makes me hesitate is the fact that Anselm keeps vacillating between (1) talk that sounds like talk about the universal human nature, and (2) talk about the "genetic" relation of descendence all other human beings have to Adam and Eve. (The latter need not imply any sort of universal, any more than we need to suppose any sort of universal Spade-family-nature or universal Germanity—even though those are genetic matters. I'm not now talking about "genetics" in the sense of DNA or chromosomes, but in the sense of "family trees.")

Here's the problem: I mentioned a moment ago how, for Anselm, Jesus is the only human being who never had original sin. And yet he was a fully constituted human being, and therefore shared in the universal human nature. So if the entire nature were corrupted and made sinful by Adam and Eve, then how could Jesus's human nature not have been corrupted and sinful just as for the rest of us?

Anselm seems to argue something like this: Adam was never born; he was created directly by God. Eve too was never born; she was taken from "Adam's rib," so she too is in a funny way related to Adam (derived from him).

All other human beings—including Jesus—are born, and are therefore descended from Adam and Eve, and ultimately from Adam. They all, so to speak, belong to the race of Adam.

Now, apart from Adam and Eve themselves, all other human beings—except Jesus—are not only descended from them, but also descended from them by the normal reproductive process involving male and female. In Jesus alone do we have a case of virginal conception and birth. (So much for other stories of parthenogenesis.)

And somehow this is supposed to make all the difference.

Jesus did have human nature and was descended from Adam, because his mother was descended from Adam. And, as we'll see, that's an important feature of the salvation story for Anselm. But, because he was not descended from Adam by the normal reproductive process, he did not share in the guilt or the penalties of original sin. (*On the Virginal Conception and on Original Sin*, Chaps. 10–12.)

What this means is that Jesus would not have died in the normal course of events. He died because he was executed, not because he was mortal. (See *CDH*, I.9). Death is a consequence of original sin, and Jesus didn't have original sin.

Furthermore, this fact has nothing to do with Jesus's "dual nature," with the fact that he is supposed to be not only a human being but God. In *On the Virginal Conception and on Original Sin*, Chap. 13 (pp. 343–44), Anselm explicitly argues that even if Jesus had not been God, but only a mere human being, as long as he was born by virginal conception and virgin birth, the results would have been the same—at least these results would have been the same. (There are other reasons why it's important that Jesus was divine.)

It's easy to read all this and see in it merely the view that "sex is dirty," or something like that. But while that may have been part of what Anselm was thinking, it's definitely not the main issue here. There's something more theoretically important than that going on here.

Let's see if we can get a handle on it.

Cur Deus Homo

And with that, let's turn to the *Cur Deus Homo*, that last thing I want to talk about in this class.

As I mentioned earlier, the *Cur Deus Homo* was finished in 1098 (*On the Virginal Conception and on Original Sin* was done the following year, 1099).

It is a dialogue, and in fact is the only one of Anselm's dialogues where his interlocutor is a real person: Boso. (*On the Virginal Conception and on Original Sin* was addressed to Boso, but was not a dialogue.) Boso was fourth Abbot of Bec. (First there was Herluin, then Anselm, then somebody else, and then Boso, 1124–36—after Anselm's death.) When Anselm became Archbishop of Canterbury, he sent to Bec and summoned him to come to Canterbury to serve as a kind of intellectual companion.

As David Brown indicates in his article in the *Cambridge Companion* (p. 279), this is the work of Anselm that has had the most influence overall. (Not the *Monologion* or even the *Proslogion*.) This is probably because there really isn't really anything quite like it before. There had been earlier efforts to tell the Christian "salvation"-story, to try to make sense of it in terms of the larger divine plan or whatever, and even to defend certain parts of it as not sheer lunacy—e.g., the notion of a God-man with two natures but only one person. But Anselm was the first one—not even Augustine tried it before—to argue that the story was not only a possible story and not outright inconsistent but also an altogether reasonable and sensible story, and in a sense even necessary.

The dialogue is divided into two books. In Book I, Chap. 1, Anselm states the question that is the theme of the whole work (p. 245):

This is the question that many unbelievers commonly raise as an objection against us, deriding Christian simplicity as foolishness, and that many believers ponder in their own hearts: by what reason or necessity did God become a human being and, as we believe and profess, restore life to the world by his own death, when he could have accomplished this through some other person, whether angelic or human, or even by his will alone?

Notice the reference to the "unbelievers." They are all throughout this work. And, in order to answer the unbelievers, we can't presuppose the various aspects of Christian doctrine, since that's precisely what they are "deriding ... as foolishness." So this work, like the *Monologion*, is going to be one of those works where we are not appealing to Scripture. Here's what he says, for instance, in the "Preface" to the work (pp. 238–39):

The first [book] presents the objections of unbelievers who reject the Christian faith because they think it contrary to reason, and the answers given by believers. It goes so far as to prove by necessary reasons—leaving Christ out of the picture, as if nothing concerning him had ever taken place—that it is impossible for any human being to be saved apart from Christ. But the second book—which again proceeds as though nothing were known of Christ—demonstrates, by means of argument and truth that is no less evident, that human nature was established in order that the whole human being, both body and soul, should at some time enjoy blessed immortality, and that it was necessary that the purpose for which human beings were made should in fact be achieved, but only through the agency of a God-man, and that it was necessary that everything we believe about Christ take place.

Who are these “unbelievers”? Well, apparently they aren’t here the usual “straw man pagans” (although they do get mentioned at II.22, at the very end of the work). Instead he seems to be thinking mainly of the Jews and perhaps also of Muslims. (He met some Muslims on one of his travels, and apparently got along quite well with them.) And that’s significant, because both Jews and Muslims certainly believe in God to begin with. (There’s no attempt in the *CDH* to argue for the existence of God.) And they also—in a sense—believe in the doctrine of Original Sin. The story of Adam and Eve’s sin and the expulsion from the Garden of Eden for them and all their progeny is, after all, in the Book of Genesis, and so has an authentic Jewish pedigree. Muslims too accept the story, although both Jews and Muslims have their own take on it.

But what they don’t accept is the view this “original sin” was quite the calamity that Christians think—think of Augustine’s “servant in the ditch” story, for instance, where the servant can do absolutely nothing to fix the situation on his own.

Still, the Jews and the Muslims have the Adam and Eve story. And so, likewise, there is no attempt in *CDH* to argue that the original sin took place, or even that Adam and Eve are the ancestors of us all (as opposed to a theory of “multiple origins,” for instance). (There is an attempt to argue that the consequences of original sin are as dramatic and catastrophic as Christians believe.)

Here is an outline of the general picture in the dialogue—leaving out a lot of the details that need to be filled in.

Human beings, of course, have wills. And wills, as we saw back in *On Truth*, have a kind of truth. A will is true when it has rectitude, when it does what it ought to do, when it fulfills its teleology, does what it was designed to do. Now the designer of course is God. So the will has rectitude when it does what God intended it to do.

Furthermore, justice, as we know, is simply rectitude of will preserved for its own sake—that is, doing what God intends you to do simply because it’s what God intends you to do. But Adam and Eve, although they were created with original justice, failed to keep it. They did not do what God intended them to do. They not only lost justice, they lost the

will for justice—just as we saw happened with the Devil in *On the Fall of the Devil* with its discussion of the two wills (the will for justice and the will for advantage).

This loss not only affects Adam and Eve but also affects all their progeny. (This is one of the steps that needs a lot of filling in of details.) So none of their progeny is just, and none of them even wants to be (i.e., wants rectitude of will for its own sake, although they may want it to avoid punishment).

Therefore, the human race, the descendants of Adam and Eve, incur a kind of collective debt or obligation as a result of Adam and Eve's sin. (This is another step that needs filling in. What is the collective debt or obligation—over and above the individual debts or obligations we all have, original sin or no original sin, to do what we ought—what God intended?)

Now the strategy here seems to be that only a God-man will suffice to pay off this additional debt. A pure human being can't do it, because even apart from the fact that human beings don't even want to do so (they've lost the will), they already owe God everything they've got and everything they can do, and so have nothing left over to pay any additional debt. The same thing applies to any other creature.

On the other hand, a pure God wouldn't be a candidate to pay off the debt, and neither would any non-human creature (e.g., an angel), because they don't owe the additional debt in the first place. Therefore—it takes a God-man. Only a God has the power to pay off the debt, and only a man owes it.

That's a bare-bones account of some of what's going on in this work.

There are lots and lots of “at first glance” problems, and lots and lots of “even on further consideration” problems as well.

Here is where I don't know what to say. This is not an aspect of Anselm I know well, and I'm not a theologian in the first place. So I'm not sure I know the rules of the game here. I'm pretty sure a lot of the objections people typically have to Anselm's account are misguided. And a lot of the secondary literature I've put on E-Reserves talks about many of these objections. But even after reading that literature, I'm still sure how the picture works.

Here are some factors:

Aesthetic arguments

Part of the problem Anselm is addressing in this work is a matter of propriety. To be sure, God is omnipotent and not under any obligation to anyone, so he can—both metaphysically and morally—do anything he chooses to.

But isn't there something strange about choosing to redeem human beings the way he did? First of all, why redeem them at all? Why not just let them stew in their own juice? After all, humanity blew it on its own. But even if he decides he is going to redeem them, why not just forgive them? Why go through all the bother of becoming incarnate, of

suffering all the normal indignities of being a human being, much less the particular torment and indignities of the crucifixion? Isn't there something unseemly about all that?

As Boso says (p. 250):

If you say that God—who you say created all things by his command—could not have accomplished all those things [= the redemption] simply by commanding them, you are contradicting yourselves, since you are making him out to be powerless. On the other hand, if you acknowledge that he could do all this simply by commanding it, but that he did not will to do it except in the way you describe, how will you be able to show that he is wise, when you claim that he willed to suffer such indignities for no reason at all? For all the things you mention reside in God's will. God's wrath is just his will to punish. So if he does not will to punish human sin, human beings are free from their sins and from God's wrath and from hell and from the power of the devil ... So if indeed God was unwilling to save the human race except in the way you describe, when he could have done so through his will alone, face up to how you are impugning his wisdom—to put it mildly. After all, no one would judge a man to be wise if, without reason, he expended great effort to do something he could have done quite easily.

Notice the references to “for no reason at all” and “without reason” here. The threat is that the Christian salvation story makes God look irrational, capricious.

Anselm, of course, is always looking for necessary reasons. And that's what he does in this work too. But—especially in this work—it turns out the “necessary reasons” include not just logical or metaphysical reasons, but also considerations of “fittingness”—what sound frankly like aesthetic reasons. (We already saw some of this in *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit*.)

Listen to this, for example (*CDH*, I.3, p. 248)—Anselm is speaking in the dialogue:

If they [= the unbelievers] attentively considered how fitting a way this was to accomplish the restoration of humankind, they would not deride our simplicity but join with us in praising God's wise benevolence. For it was fitting that just as death entered the human race through the disobedience of a human being, so too life should be restored by the obedience of a human being. It was fitting that just as the sin that was the cause of our damnation had its origin from a woman [= Eve, who sinned before Adam did], so too the author of our justice and salvation should be born of a woman [= Mary]. And it was fitting that the devil, who through the tasting of a tree defeated the human being whom he persuaded, should be defeated by a human being through the suffering on a tree [= the cross] that he [= the devil] inflicted.

Again (II.8, p. 296):

There are four ways in which God can make a human being: from a man and a woman, as everyday experience shows; or from neither a man nor a woman, as he created Adam; or from a man without a woman, as he made Eve [directly from Adam's rib]; or from a woman without a man, which he had never done. So in order to prove that this last way was within his power and had been held in reserve for this very deed, nothing was more fitting than for him to assume the human being whom we are seeking from a woman without a man.

The appeal here is to a kind of almost rhetorical balance. And it runs all throughout the *CDH* and to some extent in *On the Procession* as well. Anselm was far from the first to appeal to rhetorical symmetry and balance in presenting theological views. Augustine made a career out of it. And there's a certain justification in doing so. One of the functions of rhetoric is to persuade people and to change lives, after all, and appealing to these considerations of form and beauty, these cadences of "just as ... so too," is a good way to get your audience caught up in what you're trying to convince them of.

But Anselm thinks these aesthetic considerations have more than a purely rhetorical force; he seems to think they have a rational force as well. In other words, they're not just good for persuasion, but also for reasoning. Thus (*CDH* I.10, p. 260):

... we will not accept anything unsuitable [= unfitting], however slight, concerning God; and we will not throw out any argument, however modest, that is not defeated by some weightier argument. For just as an impossibility follows from anything unsuitable in God, however slight, so too necessity accompanies every argument, however modest, that is not defeated by some weightier argument.

The problem with this of course is that Anselm seems to be confining his sense of "suitability" and aesthetic balance to Greco-Roman rhetorical tastes. There are, after all, different ways of constructing an aesthetically pleasing and well-balanced whole, and they may not all lead to—or even permit—the same results. And even within the confines of Anselm's aesthetic notions, there seem to be more than one way to do it. For instance, when he says in *CDH* I.3 (p. 248):

It was fitting that just as the sin that was the cause of our damnation had its origin from a woman, so too the author of our justice and salvation should be born of a woman

Note how the sin came from a woman, whereas the salvation doesn't come from a woman but from a man born of a woman. Wouldn't it have been a tighter parallel and a more fitting arrangement if the savior had been a woman instead of a man?

Feudal considerations

Another feature of the *Cur Deus Homo* that is often cited in the secondary literature—usually as an objection to his theory—is his appeal in essential ways to notions of justice, duty, satisfaction and honor that seem to be peculiar to the medieval feudal society in which Anselm found himself. So the objection in effect is that Anselm’s theory is too anachronistic to be of any use in present theological contexts. And even if it’s not anachronistic, it’s just too legalistic—as if the salvation story were some kind of lawsuit.

There is some tendency in the more recent secondary literature to get past this objection. Richard Campbell, in his paper “The Conceptual Roots of Anselm’s Soteriology” (on E-Reserves), argues that while these notions do have the ring of medieval feudalism, at least some of them are conceptually grounded far more deeply than that. For instance, we’ve already seen the notions of duty and justice developed in the *On Truth*, in ways that have nothing especially to do with feudalism but instead with a much broader notion of teleology.

I think Campbell’s paper is very interesting, but undeveloped. The ideas in it need to be worked out much more fully.

Besides, it must be confessed that there are some features of Anselm’s account that do sound pretty quaint and perhaps anachronistic. For instance, there is the odd notion that the severity of a crime or offense depends not just on what you do but who the victim is. Yet there is a basis for this even in modern thinking. For instance, it’s one thing to strike your neighbor. That might get you no more than a charge of public disorder or at most battery. But it’s quite another thing to strike the king. That might well get you hanged.

Threatening your neighbor might get you a court injunction or a charge of intimidation. Threatening the President will be taken much more seriously.

So too, disobeying a passer-by on the street who tells me to stop staring at him is probably at worst bad manners. Disobeying a police officer who tells me to clear the area might be regarded as a more serious matter. But disobeying God, Anselm thinks, is an infinite crime of unspeakable hideousness.

So we can make sense out of some of this even in a modern context. The special status of police officers or the President, for instance, can be explained as necessary for them to do their job, or for the maintenance of public order. But that isn’t going to apply to God, who can do his “job” no matter what.

And yet Anselm is pretty strong about the infinite seriousness of any offense against God. For instance, *Cur Deus Homo* I.21 (pp. 281–82)—Anselm is speaking:

Imagine that you found yourself under God’s watchful eye and someone said to you, “Look over there,” but God said, “I do not in any way want you to look.” Now ask yourself in your own heart what there is, among all the things that are, for the sake of which you ought to take that look,

contrary to the will of God. [Not surprisingly, Boso replies that there's nothing for the sake of which he OUGHT to do that.]

... what if it were necessary that either the whole world and whatever is not God perish and return to nothing, or else you do such a small thing contrary to God's will? [Same answer.]

What if there were many worlds, as full of creatures as this one is?

Boso: Even if there were infinitely many worlds spread out before me, I would give the same answer. [In short, it wouldn't be justified even for the sake of an INFINITE number of universes!]

Anselm: That is how seriously we sin every time we knowingly do something, however small, contrary to the will of God...

There's also lots of talk about God's demanding payback, satisfaction. The upshot of the "feudalism" objection then is that what we end up with is a picture of God as a petulant tyrant with a tender ego.

Sketch of some of the argument in *CDH*

Let's look more closely at some of the moves of the argument in *CDH*. For this, I'm taking a lot of guidance from Frank Burch Brown's summary in his "The Beauty of Hell: Anselm on God's Eternal Design." (That paper goes on to criticize Anselm's views in ways I'm not sure I want to endorse. But his summary of *CDH* is one of the clearest accounts I know of an otherwise very diffuse and complex argument.

First of all, in addition to all the other things he created, God also created rational creatures. These included not only human beings but also the angels. (Angels appear also in both the Jewish and the Muslim traditions.) And they were created for the purpose of their enjoying eternal blessedness.

Now God, in his infinite wisdom, knew that if he was going to create rational creatures for this purpose, there was a certain "reasonable and perfect number" of them that should enjoy this blessed state.

At first this just sounds like some kind of bizarre number-mysticism. But Steven S. Aspensen makes a good point in his paper "In Defense of Anselm" (on E-Reserves, n. 8):

Humans, being social creatures, would be considered happier in a social setting with a certain number of individuals to interact with. To illustrate this point, consider the family: people often debate the proper number of children to supply the social environment most conducive to a family's happiness; they also come to conclusions which seem justified. So too, it seems, God would know the proper number of rational beings [including angels] to create for favorable social interaction. [Presumably, the angels and human beings are going to be one big happy family up there.] It may

be a particular number or any within a suitable range of numbers, which is not specified by Anselm.

Ok, so we've got this ideal number. But some angels fell. So we need to make up for them, or else God's plan would be frustrated in a most unfitting way.

Why God couldn't have just "overcommitted" on the original creation, so that—in his omniscience—he ends up with just the right number of rational creatures enjoying blessedness, I don't know. As far as I can find, Anselm never considers that alternative. But let's assume that somehow it's ruled out.

How else then are we going to restore the ideal number?

Well, why not just make some more angels—i.e., new ones to take the place of the fallen ones?

But that would be unfitting. The new angels would be in the position of seeing what happened to their fallen fellows, and so would realize that their will for advantage [*commodum*] exactly coincided with their will for justice—and in fact justice was to their advantage.

(Recall how in *On the Fall of the Devil* it was important that the angels have a real choice, and that they not know in advance how God would react to disobedience—he might just be merciful, after all. It was therefore important that they choose without being fully informed of where their best interests really lay.)

So new—after-the-fact—angels wouldn't be in the same situation as their older kind. And in fact, they would not have any real choice about persevering.

So it would be unfitting and improper to reward them with the blessedness won by the free choice of their older fellows.

Thus, new, additional angels won't do the trick.

But neither can the fallen angels be redeemed by a kind of perfect representative of their kind—as humans can, it will turn out. This is because, recall, angels do not constitute a race. There is no descendant-relation among them. (We're still not sure what difference this makes, but in any case that's supposed to rule out the possibility of any kind of angel-redeemer.)

Furthermore, it would be unfitting—and therefore impossible—for God just to forgive them outright, and to reward them along with those who didn't need forgiving in the first place and who persevered in justice all along.

So there's no way to make up for the number of fallen angels through angels, either additional ones or the original ones.

But the only other rational creatures are human beings. Therefore, the only way to restore the ideal number of the blessed is through men.

Furthermore, it would have been unseemly and inappropriate to have the number of blessed human beings end up being exactly the same as the number of fallen angels. For in that case, each blessed human being would have occasion to know that he got to be blessed only because some angel fell, and would therefore have reason to rejoice over the fall of the devils! How unfitting that would be!

So the original plan for the ideal number of blessed rational creatures must have included from the very beginning a certain number of human beings.

But there's a problem. Adam and Eve, the original human beings, fell too. And, unlike the angels, human beings constitute a race (they are all descended from Adam and Eve). Therefore, when Adam and Eve fell, their sin somehow infected human nature as a whole. (We still don't know how that works.)

On the other hand, that same fact—that human beings constitute a race—somehow means that it's possible for a perfect representative of the race to fix things for the race as a whole, and to set things right again. (Again, we still don't know how this RACE business works.) And that's exactly what happened.

Now, how does this redemption-business work?

Well, we need to start with the idea of a kind of double-debt involved in a crime. If I take something that belongs to you—say, I steal your car—it's not enough in order to fix things, to make it OK again, if I just return your car. No, in addition I have to do something more, I have to pay some additional penalty, whether monetary or otherwise, something more that I didn't owe you before. This is what in the law we call "paying damages." And it doesn't matter whether any real "damage" has been done. You may be filthy rich and have whole fleets of cars and not really suffer any real loss at all if I steal one of them. But that doesn't make any difference. There's still something inappropriate and unfitting about your writing off my crime if I just return what was properly yours and don't do anything further.

So, first I owe you the car I took, and then I owe you "damages." (Note the legalism in all this.)

Now, in the case of God, a sin consists of taking from God the obedience that is rightfully owed to him from the outset. (Recall the notion of duty from as early as *On Truth*.) And in fact every human being owes absolutely everything he has to God from the very outset.

So when a human being sins, he takes from God something he owes to God. In order to make it right again, he must now only give back to God the obedience he owed him in the first place, but also pay "damages." He must do something more.

But what else can he do? He already owes God everything he has. So there's nothing left over that's available to pay as damages.

And that's the situation we're all in. We're all in the position of owing something we can't pay.

And this is where Jesus comes in. How does it work?

Here is where things get very murky for me, because we're getting this confusing trade-off between the notions of race and nature. I still need to do work on this.

But one approach I find very helpful but not sufficient to solve all our problems is a distinction drawn by Steven S. Aspengren, in his paper "In Defense of Anselm"

He distinguishes between what he calls **(a)** a "societal" debt—not a debt to society, but a debt owed by society as a whole, that is, a social debt or what we might call a collective DUTY, and so a corresponding social or collective GUILT if that duty is not fulfilled, and **(b)** a "personal" debt or duty, and correspondingly a personal guilt if YOU don't fulfill it.

He gives the following example (p. 38) of "societal debt" or collective responsibility:

... the Constitution of the United States, playing the role of a codification of the requirements of justice [I'm not sure that's what it does, but never mind], obligates each citizen to supply someone to fill the office of President but does not hold any citizen guilty of violating that obligation if he himself does not exercise supererogation in societal action by becoming President.

So the idea here is of a kind of "non-distributive" duty or responsibility. Any one person could satisfy it by becoming President, and if no one does, then something's gone collectively wrong and needs to be fixed. But no single individual is obligated to become President.

So too, the analogy goes, by sin the human race as a whole has incurred a certain duty or obligation to God. Any one human being could satisfy it (if he were able and willing), but no one individual is obliged to do so.

What is this social debt? Well, it seems to be the "damages" we talked about earlier.

Apparently any member of the race is eligible to pay the damages owed because of the original sin of Adam and Eve, and for that matter any subsequent sins they or their descendants might commit.

Similarly, I can pay your court fines if it comes to that.

On the other hand, there has to be some connection between whoever or whatever pays the fines and the person who incurs them. If the judge should turn around and suddenly discover a fabulously valuable diamond on the floor under his bench, or if the heavens should suddenly open up and start raining down dollar bills, that wouldn't count as paying your fine.

This is why the racial element seems to be prominent in Anselm. (Why it's a matter of race and decendence rather than a matter of nature, as with the angels, I don't know.)

In any case, Jesus pays this debt to rectify the sin of Adam and Eve.

On the other hand, whatever he uses to pay this debt can't be something he already owes to God. That wouldn't count, any more than I can pay your court fine by offering my tax payments. I already owe those.

So what we need is for Jesus to offer in payment something that he doesn't already owe to God, and something sufficient to pay the debt incurred by the sin of Adam and Eve, and by any subsequent sins committed by them or their descendants.

What can that be? Insofar as he is a human being, he already owes God his complete obedience and everything he has.

Yes—but he doesn't owe God death. He's under no obligation to die. Death, remember, is a consequence of original sin. But Jesus is exempt from original sin. So he doesn't have to pay that penalty. Recall, Jesus was not in the normal course of events mortal.

Therefore, if he does voluntarily die anyway (which is of course what happened), that overpayment is available to help pay down the debt incurred by Adam and Eve and by their progeny.

This much is true even if Jesus is not God, but merely a human being. As long as he never had original sin, his death can be used in this way.

On the other hand, if he is only a human being, his death won't be sufficient to pay off the social debt Aspenson describes. After all, the offense against God, and therefore the damages incurred was of infinite magnitude (recall the feudal notion)—over and above restoring to God what was owed to him in the first place and was “stolen” from him by sin.

So no mere human, no matter how virtuous and innocent, can ever do anything that will completely pay off the “damages.” And for the same reason, no other creature can do it either. Only God has that kind of “value.” And yet only a human being—a member of the “race of Adam”—is eligible to do so in a way that is fitting and appropriate.

What we need, therefore, is someone who is both a member of the human race—and therefore eligible to pay off the debt—and also divine—and therefore able to pay enough.

That's why we need a God-man. And that's *cur deus homo*.